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Sixtieth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)
later: Mr. Gujadhur (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mauritius)

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Agenda item 33: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

05-55079 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 33: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/60/21 and A/60/173)

1. **Mr. Al-Hebsi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the role of the modern media in the service of peace and global development had never been more important, especially since Internet and satellite communications had created a widening civilizational gap between developed and developing countries. The United Arab Emirates was troubled by deliberate distortions by irresponsible Western media institutions of the beliefs and civilization of peoples of developing countries and called for an international code of ethics that would ensure transparent transmission of truthful information, guarantee respect for religious beliefs and cultural diversity, shun racial and ethnic chauvinism and discrimination, and protect the media in conflict zones.

2. In the wake of the recommendations of the Millennium Summit and the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit, it was vital for the United Nations system to enhance the use of communications in its work. While the United Arab Emirates welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information in recent years to publicize the cause of the Organization, it called for the mobilization of more resources to bring the United Nations Arabic radio, television and Internet services up to the same standard as those for the other official languages. His country stressed the need for more awareness programmes in local languages, and was systematically employing the latest technology to familiarize its society with other cultures, while preserving its traditional heritage and the principles of Islam. His Government had concluded a number of bilateral media and cultural agreements with United Nations institutions, participated in international and regional media conferences, and stepped up its involvement in global development projects, including those offering assistance to developing countries and countries afflicted by war and natural disasters. It called for the enhancement of the Department's activities, especially with regard to raising awareness of Palestinian suffering under Israel's policy of aggression, murder, blockades and settlement-building.

3. **Mr. Trepelkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the steps taken by the Department of Public Information to implement the new strategic goals, structural reforms and functional priorities, and believed that the establishment of a culture of communication should continue to be a key element in enhancing the efficiency of the entire United Nations system. At the same time, it deemed it necessary, once again, to draw the Department's attention to the need to continue to focus its efforts on the dissemination of information that was genuinely important and strategic for the United Nations in the light of the decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit.

4. The Russian Federation believed that Security Council resolution 1624 (2005) would place a serious barrier in the way of those who tried to use the media to incite and justify terrorism. In addition, it commended the Department for the success of the "Unlearning Intolerance" seminars, for its work in elaborating the draft communications strategy to fight terrorism, and for its broad support for the new Executive Directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

5. His Government supported the renewed plan to rationalize the United Nations information centres, and in that regard, noted the steady and efficient work of United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Moscow — which played a coordinating role in the outreach activities of United Nations agencies, and supported the enhancement of its regional role as the rationalization process continued. In that context, in response to a request from the Department, the issue of exempting UNIC Moscow from the costs of rent and services was being considered in conjunction with the problem of finding a location for the United Nations country office in Moscow.

6. His Government commended the Department's work to improve and streamline United Nations libraries and to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the Organization's library services, and welcomed efforts to improve the UN Chronicle. It supported the Department's commitment to the principle of multilingualism and equality of official languages and the delivery of equal information services, both in quantity and quality, for Member States, as well as efforts to ensure language parity on the website, in the News Service, and in the international radio broadcasting service. In that regard, it noted that the Russian version of the website and the News Service were becoming increasingly popular with Russian-speaking users, and was of the view that

the Russian-language radio programme, "60 Years in 60 Minutes" would contribute to that trend. It expressed appreciation for the Department's assistance in organizing and conducting joint activities to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and that of the United Nations.

7. **Mr. Zarkashi** (Malaysia) said that his delegation was confident that the reform of the Department of Public Information would enhance its performance and was pleased that the Department had focused its campaign on current and relevant issues. At a time when the effectiveness of the Organization was being called into question, it was important for its activities and achievements to be widely publicized. Malaysia commended the Department for the translation of the executive summary of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2000) into many languages, including Bahasa Malaysia. It also believed that the United Nations information centres played an important role in reaching out to the international community.

8. His Government was grateful to the Department for continuing its news activities in Africa, in particular its support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and welcomed its efforts to enhance United Nations activities in support of sustainable development in Africa. It believed, however, that an action-oriented strategy was required, in order to ensure United Nations involvement, on a continuing basis, in a joint international effort to assist Africa in resolving its problems. Malaysia supported the use of clear, simple and consistent messages to help ordinary African people to understand their role and responsibility in national development, and the formulation of a single United Nations communications strategy for NEPAD, with the participation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.

9. Malaysia congratulated the Department on its work in organizing the 13th International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, and urged it to continue to highlight issues related to Palestine until such time as a peaceful settlement of the conflict could be achieved. The steps taken by the Department to improve the image of the Organization among the peoples of the Middle East were encouraging; Malaysia welcomed the development of a strategic communications framework in that region.

10. His Government encouraged the Department to continue to cooperate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the development of a global communications strategy to raise awareness about the new realities it faced; and to continue to support the dissemination of information about dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace. Malaysia was in favour of multilingualism, especially on the website; in its view, wider outreach could be achieved only through an equitable use of all six of the official languages.

11. **Mr. Baja** (Philippines) said that the role of the Department in promoting a positive image of the United Nations was indispensable; in that regard, the previous year had been a challenging one. The controversies surrounding the Oil-for-Food Programme and the allegations of sexual abuse involving peacekeepers had unfortunately received more prominent media coverage than the Department's efforts to project a positive image of the work of the United Nations. The Department had nonetheless risen to the challenge, and had brought the message of the Organization to as many people as possible, within the limits of available resources. The Philippines commended the Department, in particular, for its handling of the aftermath of the tsunami in South and South-East Asia in 2004, for its promotion of United Nations initiatives, in particular the Millennium Project, for publicizing the 2005 World Summit and the third summit meeting of the Security Council, and for its assistance to the Philippine-initiated Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace.

12. The Philippines welcomed the Department's reorientation process, and approved of the client-oriented approach as well as the system-wide coordination of public information activities. The Department's expanded linkages with media and non-governmental organizations and its enhanced use of new information and communication technologies should allow it to reach a much larger audience and respond more effectively to modern challenges. His Government supported the enhancement of public information capacities with a view to promoting a better understanding of the work of the United Nations, around the world, and supported expanded cooperation with other substantive United Nations organs, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

13. In view of the outcry against allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations, as well as other negative publicity, the Philippines, as the largest troop-contributing country in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), urged the Department of Public Information and the information components of the various missions to speak with one voice and immediately and effectively address any issues or concerns. A quick response mechanism should be complemented by an information drive to provide host Governments and their peoples with a better understanding of the role of the United Nations in their countries.

14. The Department should pay special attention to the needs and requirements of developing nations in the field of information and communications technologies. Traditional media as well as radio and television stations should all be encouraged to tell the United Nations story, using native languages. The Philippines supported calls for the allocation of additional resources for the United Nations information centres, especially in the least developed and developing countries of Asia and Africa. The Department should continue to work with Member States to help promote a better understanding of the Organization in their countries, and to expand linkages with educational institutions.

15. **Ms. Poon** (Singapore) said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteed the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which included the right to seek and receive information. The Department of Public Information had shown an unwavering commitment to its duty of empowering communities with information, and had displayed creativity in harnessing new technologies and in working with other organizations to make the most of their capabilities and resources. It faced several challenges, however. It was competing for space with a plethora of information services, which were particularly difficult for a small nation like Singapore to negotiate; unfortunately, the information gap was widening between rich and poor countries. In that context, she was pleased to note that the Department had not abandoned more traditional means of communication such as radio and television, and was targeting audiences and tailoring messages to their needs. The Department should also provide support to civil society partners with a view to better disseminating the United Nations message.

16. It was essential to avoid sensationalism and bias. The United Nations message should be clear, timely and accurate. Credibility was vital, as the ability to filter information was becoming as important than the ability to transmit it. The image and credibility of the United Nations was not the sole purview of the Department of Public Information, however, but was the shared responsibility of all persons who worked for the United Nations, and of Member States. In that regard, Singapore approved of the creation of an Ethics Office to encourage financial transparency and avert misconduct, with a view to boosting the integrity standards of the United Nations. Credibility was non-negotiable; and clear accountability was essential. It was also important to steer the attention of the world towards the work that the vast majority of United Nations workers and volunteers were painstakingly carrying out. A good information strategy should focus on what the United Nations wanted to do for the world, and should avoid peripheral and short-term issues. Singapore was confident that the Department would rise to those challenges.

17. *Mr. Gujadhur (Mauritius), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

18. **Ms. Miller** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reaffirmed the vital role of the Department of Public Information in promoting a positive image of the United Nations through the provision of information on the Organization's activities. She welcomed the completion of the reform and reorientation of the Department and the ongoing efforts to integrate new information and communications technologies at all levels, which should help improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, since many of the target audiences in developing countries did not have access to the most up-to-date technology, the Department should continue to maintain its use of traditional methods of communication, including radio and print media.

19. She commended the Department for its work on the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, in which the United Nations information centres, especially those in developing countries, had played an important role. The Department should also maintain its focus on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, the question of Palestine, decolonization, dialogue among civilizations and the special needs of Africa. Implementation of the outcomes of the major United

Nations summits and conferences was another area deserving special attention. In addition, the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in November 2005, should be effectively promoted. Welcoming the launch of UNIFEED, she said that increased resources should be allocated to it, as it helped to publicize the accomplishments of many United Nations agencies which otherwise often went unnoticed by the world's media.

20. With regard to the proposals for rationalization of the United Nations information centres, it should be borne in mind that the centres in developing countries played a crucial role in promoting the public image of the Organization. They should therefore be assisted in strengthening their impact, including through strategic communications support if necessary. The Group of 77 and China hoped that additional resources would be found to hold workshops in all regions for the staff of the centres. Any rationalization should have the sole purpose of improving efficiency and effectiveness and should not result in closures of centres. Moreover, the views of the host country of a given centre should be taken into account in the consideration of proposals for that centre, including with regard to evaluating its effectiveness.

21. The Group of 77 and China supported the efforts of the Department to enhance the United Nations website in all official languages. The Department should continue to strive for parity among official languages. It was also important to strengthen the Department's public information capacity in the field of peacekeeping. To that end, collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be continued.

22. The role of the Department as the public voice of the Organization should be further consolidated in the ongoing process of reform. In particular, continued efforts were needed to counter negative publicity and to correct distorted or biased reports of corruption or ineffectiveness. It should also be mentioned that, especially in relation to controversial aspects of the reform process, the Secretariat should maintain political impartiality and avoid imparting negative perceptions of positions taken by Member States in the negotiating process. A balanced approach that recognized the rights and interests of all Member States in accordance with the principle of the sovereign equality of States was clearly required.

23. **Ms. Yan** Jarong (China) said that her delegation appreciated the services provided by the Department of Public Information during the 2005 World Summit. The Department should now focus on publicizing the World Summit Outcome and accelerating its implementation, giving top priority to meeting the special needs of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. The Department played a vital role in publicizing the objectives of the United Nations and promoting a positive image of the Organization. Following the completion of the reorientation process, her delegation looked forward to the Department becoming a more powerful public voice for the United Nations.

24. She welcomed the articles by the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information that had been published in a number of prominent newspapers and magazines with a view to clarifying the Organization's position on certain issues. The Secretariat should build on that approach, using the most effective means to communicate United Nations news. Closer links with non-governmental organizations and with the public and private sectors were also a good way of spreading information. The briefings and other activities held for non-governmental organizations were welcome, but many non-governmental organizations from developing countries had been unable to participate owing to a lack of funds. It was therefore to be hoped that other means such as mailings and the Internet would be used to strengthen communications with them.

25. United Nations Radio and the Organization's website were important sources of information, and their multilingual capacity should be reinforced. It was to be hoped that sufficient resources would be allocated so as to achieve parity among all official languages.

26. The United Nations information centres around the world had been instrumental in communicating the Organization's message and mobilizing public support for its activities. Her delegation hoped to see them become more influential and effective. With regard to rationalization of the centres, more consultations should be conducted with the relevant Member States, taking into account the specific conditions of different regions.

27. China was highly appreciative of the United Nations role in world affairs, a fact demonstrated by

the presence of the President of China, Hu Jintao, at the 2005 World Summit. Her Government, together with Chinese non-governmental organizations and media, had organized a number of activities to celebrate the Organization's sixtieth anniversary. Chinese people were increasingly aware that, in the face of numerous global threats and challenges, both China and the world needed the United Nations. She particularly thanked the Department for its assistance with the China-United Nations Photo Exhibition and welcomed the production of special sixtieth anniversary programmes by United Nations Radio in collaboration with Chinese media partners. The essay competition "The United Nations in my eyes" had also been a successful joint venture. China looked forward to further strengthening its links with the United Nations and the Department in the future so as to continue to enhance the positive public perception of the Organization.

28. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his Government was anxious that the new world information order should reflect the United Nations values of equality, justice and mutual respect. The primary task of the Department of Public Information was to serve as the voice of the Organization on issues on which United Nations bodies had issued resolutions, especially foreign occupation, poverty and disease. His delegation feared that the strengthening of communications partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector might be employed for the benefit of outside media parties who would not necessarily be impartial in conveying the voice of the United Nations.

29. His Government was in the process of drafting a new law to support communications workers that affirmed freedom of information in a way that conformed to Syrian culture. It welcomed the thirteenth annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East and hoped that the Department of Public Information would continue to organize more such activities, and especially implement the special information programme on Palestine, in view of the tragic consequences the Palestinians were suffering from Israeli occupation.

30. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to enhance the United Nations website and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, but noted that the Arabic website was in need of greater allocation of resources and personnel to deal with the special problems posed by Arabic script and, in that regard, asked what steps had been taken to implement General Assembly resolution 59/277. His delegation stressed the need to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing nations. It also hoped that the Department would enhance awareness of the role of the Committee, in particular its decolonization efforts, and would make clear to those who complained that all that the Committee did was re-adopt the same resolutions every year that the way to put an end to the re-adoption of resolutions was to implement them.

31. **Mr. Adel** (Egypt) said that his delegation had participated in formulating the draft resolution on the issue under consideration because of its belief that United Nations media services needed to be brought up to date. Greater balance among the six official languages would bring peoples together, increase dialogue between civilizations, and enhance the Organization's ability to achieve peace and national reconciliation in post-conflict countries. He thanked the Department of Public Information for organizing the thirteenth annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East and expressed the hope that the Department would continue raising awareness of the requirements for peace in the Middle East through media messages that supported legitimate demands for the end of the occupation. It should also develop a strategy that reflected the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit.

32. On the question of the United Nations information centres, his delegation believed that the immediate task was to make maximum use of the limited resources currently available, and to use technological advances to connect the centres with each other and ensure rapid provision of easily accessible information. His Government looked forward to greater contributions by the Department of Public Information to dialogue between civilizations, a culture of peace, eliminating the confusion between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples under occupation, narrowing the digital divide between north and south, confronting the challenges of development, and creating a climate of public opinion favourable to United Nations reform.

33. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the modern world faced many problems and challenges of which the public needed to be made aware. The Department of Public Information played a crucial role in providing such information in an impartial and

unbiased manner, particularly given the power of the mass media to shape public opinion in a globalized world. His delegation commended the Department's activities in the past year, including the promotion of the 2005 World Summit, and encouraged the Department to maintain its focus on areas of specific interest to developing countries. The Department should be strengthened and given the necessary tools so that it could continue to project a positive image of the United Nations.

34. In that context, it was also necessary to strengthen the United Nations information centres around the world. Reducing the number of centres in developing regions would only weaken the voice of the Organization. His delegation was therefore pleased to note that the Secretary-General was now proposing to rationalize the network of centres rather than create regional hubs on the basis of the Western European model.

35. His delegation encouraged the Department to build on the process of reform and reorientation by incorporating evaluation in its future activities and reviewing the quality of its products and services on a regular basis. The United Nations information centres should be included in the evaluation process, with particular attention paid to the views of the host countries, so as to enhance the centres' efficiency and effectiveness. Welcoming the seminars organized by the Department on dialogue among civilizations and cultures, he encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to make such dialogue a high priority. The United Nations information centres could be further utilized to promote dialogue among civilizations and, to that end, should be provided with modern communication technology and adequate financial resources.

36. **Ms. Holguín** (Colombia) said that her Government attached great importance to the activities of the United Nations Information Centre in Colombia; it provided 81 per cent of the annual budget of the Information Centre which had the largest United Nations presence in Latin America. Her Government took the view that information about a country and its region should be generated within that country or region. It therefore made sense for the Information Centre to remain in Colombia.

37. Colombia opposed the process of regionalization, which had not produced the desired results, and favoured a more gradual approach. Rationalization meant improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the information centres and of the activities of the Department in general. The closure or transfer of centres would not serve that purpose. Any proposals for change in that regard should be agreed upon in consultation with Member States and, in the implementation phase, with individual host countries.

38. Her delegation welcomed the completion of the reform process in the Department of Public Information. Colombia had recently presented a sixtieth birthday gift to the United Nations in the form of the "Carnaval de Barranquilla", proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The support of the Department in staging the event at United Nations Headquarters was greatly appreciated.

39. **Mr. Choi** (Republic of Korea) said that at a time when the United Nations needed to enhance its visibility in the international community and among ordinary citizens the world over, the Department of Public Information had an essential role to play, and was to be commended for enhancing public information by adopting a client-based approach. The Republic of Korea welcomed the significant improvements that had been made to the United Nations website through the use of the latest technology. The site had become one of the most significant sources of public information on the United Nations, and it was to the credit of the Department that the number of people using it had continued to increase. The Department had played an active role in drawing attention to the United Nations reform process and the 2005 World Summit, and should now focus attention on the implementation of the World Summit Outcome.

40. In the key area of outreach, the Department needed to enhance its information dissemination towards countries that did not use any of the official United Nations languages. Some of those countries were those that supported the United Nations most strongly, or that were most in need of United Nations operations, and their citizens must not be excluded from the global conversation because they spoke a different language. The Department's work in publicizing the Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom", including translating the executive summary into numerous languages beyond the official six, was

both a step in the right direction and a sign of how much remained to be done. The valuable work of United Nations information centres in providing localized web content should also be enhanced. The Republic of Korea also welcomed the reform effort of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library community and commended the progress made so far.

41. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders had made their view abundantly clear that the United Nations system as a whole needed greatly increased evaluation and oversight. It was thus encouraging that the Department was succeeding in meeting the demands of an average of 80 per cent of its target audiences in terms of usefulness, relevance and quality. The culture of evaluation should be encouraged and periodically renewed.

42. **Ms. Baaziz** (Algeria) said that while the transmission of knowledge in the developed countries had facilitated progress, that progress was not shared with the countries of the South, with the disparities in access to new information technologies constituting an obstacle to the latter's development. It was clear that reducing those imbalances had to be part and parcel of a major international thrust to reach the Millennium Development Goals and contribute to reducing poverty and improving living conditions. The United Nations, and particularly the Department of Public Information, must work to ensure all countries equitable access to the benefits of information technologies, in order to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries. Algeria hoped that the World Summit on the Information Society would be a true expression of digital solidarity that would provide an opportunity to meet the challenges of new information technologies and distribute their advantages, in the service of the Millennium Declaration.

43. Welcoming the work carried out by the Department of Public Information to publicize important economic, social, environmental and health issues, as well as a number of the Organization's political and security initiatives, she commended the effort that it had invested to face up to the campaign of hostility to which the United Nations had been exposed.

44. Respect for diversity in means of expression and multilingualism, within the United Nations system, remained a matter of concern for many Member States. She repeated her delegation's call for fair and balanced treatment of the six official languages in the services offered by the United Nations on the web as well as with respect to documentation and reference material. Stressing the great importance that her country attached to the United Nations information centres, which played a very special role, particularly in the developing countries lacking technological resources, she appealed for adequate funding and staffing for them.

45. **Mr. Hasan** (Sudan) said that the Committee on Information needed to address the necessity of developing a modern communications system that enhanced international peace and coexistence based on transparency and the free flow of information. One could not speak of the Millennium Development Goals in isolation from the pivotal role of information, which was a cornerstone of sustainable development, democracy, political participation, good governance, human rights, and particularly freedom of the press. The digital divide and the gap in information and communications technology between the developing and developed countries had left too many people in the dark. His Government was therefore gratified that public information and communications had been placed at the heart of the reform of the United Nations. As a country that had just emerged at the beginning of the year from one of the longest lasting conflicts in Africa, Sudan was particularly appreciative of the role that the United Nations information centres played in fostering peace in post-conflict situations.

46. **Mr. Suhail** (Pakistan) said that the task of the Department of Public Information was of vital significance for Member States. The resurgence of interest in the work of the United Nations could only be maximized by an effective performance by the Department, since the public at large had to be kept informed of and involved in the Organization's activities.

47. There was little doubt that there were vast disparities and imbalances in the flow of information between countries and regions, and most pertinently between the developed and the developing worlds. More than ever before, it was imperative to strengthen the information and communication infrastructure of the developing world, which was badly handicapped due to scarce resources and lack of training in modern technology. Unable adequately to disseminate information to the rest of the world, the developing world was overwhelmed by the formidable media of

the developed world which dominated the flow of information, making it lopsided and unidirectional, and undermining understanding and goodwill between societies, regions and cultures. Information and communication must be put to use primarily for the sake of bringing regions and religions closer to each other. The UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication could assist in achieving that objective; the General Assembly should call for a report from UNESCO so that Member States could learn what was being done in that regard.

48. The report of the Committee on Information clearly emphasized the importance of the network of United Nations information centres in enhancing the public image of the United Nations, especially in developing countries. His delegation was therefore pleased that the idea of creating regional hubs was no longer being considered. His Government attached considerable importance to traditional means of communication such as radio. United Nations broadcasts in Urdu, for example, served a useful purpose in disseminating information about the Organization to local people.

49. Stressing the importance of the role of the Department of Public Information in disseminating information about United Nations peacekeeping operations and strengthening dialogue among civilizations and the cultures of peace, he urged the Department also to cover the achievements of Member States with regard to the Millennium Development Goals and initiatives to bring religions and cultures closer to each other.

50. It was to be hoped that the Outreach Division could improve its service to ensure timely dispatch of its publications. He also urged the Department to ensure equitable representation of journalists from developing countries, not only in gaining access to the Secretary-General for interviews, but also in their placement in the United Nations press gallery and their accreditation. Not many journalists from developing countries were able to travel to the United Nations to cover its activities, but those who managed to do so should be assisted on a priority basis. Expressing support for the Dag Hammarsjköld Memorial Scholarship Fund of the United Nations Correspondents' Association (UNCA), he emphasized that the Department, in addition to extending support to UNCA, might itself provide funding to a greater number of journalists from developing countries to visit the United Nations and cover its activities.

51. **Mr. Win** (Myanmar) said that at a time when the United Nations system had been tarnished in the media, his delegation appreciated the role played by the Department in communicating to the world the process of revitalization and reform in the United Nations, and its strategy to focus on the work of the United Nations in priority areas. Myanmar also noted with satisfaction the Department's initiative of further integrating new information and communication technologies into its global communication infrastructure, which would, in turn, meet the many and varied needs of its clients. There was a pressing need to close the widening digital divide between the developed and developing worlds, as a result of which vast segments of the population in developing countries were not benefiting from the information technology revolution; his delegation urged the Department to play an active role in putting information and communication technologies in the service of development.

52. In order to achieve one of the Millennium Development Goals, Myanmar was taking all possible measures to raise the level of education. The number of universities and colleges had been increased to 156 across the country. Efforts were being made to achieve universal primary education. Myanmar had done its best, within its limited resources, to equip those schools with tools for information technology. There had been a campaign to open libraries at all state, division and township levels. Against that background, the United Nations Information Centre in Yangon was invaluable in disseminating information on United Nations activities to the public at large.

53. The United Nations information centres strengthened the flow of information in the developing countries and provided access to information technology, particularly when there were no alternative means of access to such benefits. Adequate resources should be allocated to ensure the effective functioning of the information centres in developing countries. While recognizing some of the benefits of regionalization and rationalization of the information centres at a time of budgetary constraints, Myanmar strongly requested that rationalization priorities should be determined primarily on the basis of the usefulness of the existing information centre to a given area and the availability of alternative means of access to United Nations information services. His delegation endorsed

the view that any changes made in the context of rationalization should not be to the detriment of the existing information centres worldwide.

54. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the Holy See recognized the right to information and its importance in the life of all democratic societies and institutions. The exercise of the freedom of communication should not depend upon wealth, education, or political power. Freedom of expression and the right to information flourished in societies when the fundamental ethics of communication were not compromised, such as the pre-eminence of truth and the good of the individual, respect for human dignity, and promotion of the common good. New technologies had an important role to play in the advancement of the poor, as recipients of information, but also as actors, able to promote their own point of view before the world's decision-makers. In that context, the Holy See had set up a unique continent-wide initiative called the Digital Network of the Church in Latin America (*Red Informática de la Iglesia en América Latina* — RIIAL) which promoted the adoption of digital technologies and programmes in media education, especially in poor areas. The Holy See also supported the continued promotion of the traditional role of libraries and radio in education.

55. Given the ever-increasing ease of access to information of every possible kind, the Holy See stressed the need to protect the most vulnerable, such as children and young people, especially in the light of the increase in content featuring violence, intolerance and pornography. Perhaps the most essential question raised by technological progress was whether, as a result of it, people would grow in dignity, responsibility and openness to others. It was to be hoped that the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society would lead to further concrete efforts to build a more inclusive digital society which would reduce the widespread "info-poverty". The information society should be one endowed with the ability, capacity and skills to generate and capture new information and to access, absorb and effectively use information, data and knowledge. Knowledge was the key to participating in the global economy, of which the Internet was an increasingly important vehicle. At the same time, there was a fundamental need to develop an ability to discern the meaning of information received, given the deluge of information available. That process could flourish only where there was a recognized hierarchy of values.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 14 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Rodriguez (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Mexico)

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Agenda item 33: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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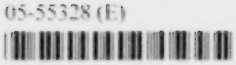
05-55328 (E)



In the absence of Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe (Myanmar), Ms. Rodriguez (Mexico), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 33: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/60/21 and A/60/173)

1. **Mr. Longhurst** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted that the Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA countries Iceland, Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, also aligned themselves with his statement.

2. Information on United Nations activities globally and publicity for the Organization's considerable achievements was crucial in bolstering support among all peoples for its mission, the more so at a time when the United Nations was seeking to improve its effectiveness, redress previous shortcomings and embark on ambitious reforms such as those established at the World Summit. The European Union commended the Under-Secretary-General and the staff of the Department of Public Information (DPI) for taking on the huge logistical challenge of dealing with unprecedented numbers of the world's press attending the Summit. It wished to express its satisfaction at the improvements under way in the management of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library since the end of 2004. It was also pleased with the further improvements in the content and technological development of the United Nations website, which was a key tool for enhancing multilingualism in the United Nations, welcomed the cooperation with the International Federation of Television Archives to preserve and restore the United Nations audio-visual collection and encouraged further steps in that direction.

3. The rationalization of the UNICs network around the world was becoming a regular feature of discussions in the Committee on Information and in the Fourth Committee. The European Union reiterated its strong view that the network was in serious need of overhaul and that concrete proposals were needed from the Secretariat covering timelines and objectives for rationalization. In 2002, it had lent its full support to the Secretary-General's proposals for the creation of regional hubs, beginning in Western Europe. It recognized that although it was an ambitious plan it could deliver real benefits. The decision to support that proposal had forced a number of European countries to take the difficult step of closing offices in their capitals, and the European Union therefore expected that full efforts would be made to see the initiative through and to create a global network that more effectively addressed the needs of customers.

4. The European Union welcomed the early implementation of the plan and noted that the budget proposal for DPI, which would be considered by the Fifth Committee in the present session, would be updated to take account of the implementation plans.

5. The European Union regretted that, once again, there were references in the Secretary-General's report to "fresh budget cuts" owing to lack of progress. That phrasing misrepresented the true position, since although the General Assembly had not approved the full amount of the increase requested, DPI had in fact been awarded a budget increase of 7.5 per cent for the current biennium. The Member States contributed significant financial support for public information in the United Nations, both through the regular budget and through the information components of the separately financed peacekeeping missions. At a time when many of its members were facing domestic budgetary pressures, the European Union felt that it had more than upheld its commitment to supporting public information at the United Nations.

6. The European Union stood ready to adopt the draft resolution prepared by the Committee on Information. The negotiations had been especially long and difficult in the current year, and it trusted that all members that had worked together to reach a consensus on this item would join in seeking its swift adoption.

7. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that the Outcome of the 2005 World Summit called for strengthening and reforming the United Nations. The Department of Public Information (DPI) played a leading role in that connection and efforts to reform it should continue. In fact, under General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, "the activities of the Department should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding

of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world". According to draft resolution B, DPI should provide "accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely" information on the activities of the Organization. That task had become urgent because the Organization's credibility had been undermined by misconduct and corruption that the Independent Inquiry Committee into the Iraq Oil-For-Food Programme (IIC) had found in the United Nations.

8. Japan had contributed $350,000 to fund the activities of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Tokyo for 2005. In three years, that contribution had increased by more than 70 per cent. UNIC Tokyo was the only centre from which the United Nations issued information in Japanese, and the year 2006 — marking the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's entry into the United Nations — offered a good opportunity for stimulating interest in the Organization's activities. Moreover, in 2005 Japan had donated to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library 38 compact disks containing more than 30,000 digitized General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council documents from the 1970s and 1980s. DPI had developed programmes to enrich the function of its libraries and reach out to the world more efficiently through new technologies. "EXPO 2005 Aichi Japan" on the theme of "Nature's Wisdom" had been on view from March through September 2005 and had been visited by more than 22 million people. The United Nations had helped to organize it, inter alia by setting up the Consultative Group for EXPO 2005. Important international issues, such as HIV/AIDS and other health questions had been discussed at the United Nations pavilion. UNIC Tokyo had publicized the participation of the United Nations in the event.

9. **Mr. Thema** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the reorientation process undertaken by DPI would increase the efficiency, improve the products and enhance the flow of United Nations public information and communications, particularly to developing countries. The work that DPI carried out in partnership with other United Nations units in the areas of human rights, peacekeeping, decolonization, development and combating HIV/AIDS deserved increased support from the United Nations system to counter the onslaught of negative publicity. The Committee's innovative interactive session on the agenda item under consideration had been beneficial thanks to targeted enquiries on issues of concern to delegations and precise responses from the Under-Secretary-General.

10. Information was critical in the fight against the debilitating scourge of HIV/AIDS. Had they been armed from the outset with the facts as to the source, spreading mechanisms, symptoms and prevention of the pandemic, SADC member States might have stopped it from reaching its current proportions. HIV presently killed more mothers and children in the SADC region than anywhere else in the world. Shorter lifespans and the reduced number of skilled workers were reversing many of the gains made in the past.

11. Events similar to the Global Media Aids Initiative, which had been held in Cannes, France in 2005, should be encouraged in the SADC region in order to involve the local media establishment in the battle against HIV/AIDS. Moreover, SADC could develop a close working relationship with DPI with a view to promoting the SADC Common Agenda, which outlined the community's policies and strategies along the lines of the broad multidimensional development goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD had enjoyed DPI support in promoting the activities of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

12. SADC applauded DPI efforts to publicize the development agenda during the build-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. The multi-site launch of the Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 was crucial to counterbalancing skewed attention paid by the media to institutional reform issues. As a result of lack of information and strategic orientation, much time and effort had been expended fighting for what had turned out to be a meagre benefit.

13. The special needs of Africa required UNIC rationalization and regionalization. In the SADC region in particular, rural communities lacked the amenities of city life and the wherewithal to access the type of advanced technology needed to receive information disseminated from a single regional centre. Accordingly, a good blend of traditional communication means and current technology in the existing centres would be an effective and practical way of achieving broad coverage. SADC therefore

welcomed the proposal of DPI to retain the current centres, with the Pretoria centre playing a coordinating role and providing strategic communications guidance and support. Current centres in the various capitals of the region should be strengthened and receive the resources needed to operate effectively. An additional information centre should be established in Luanda to serve the needs of the five Portuguese-speaking nations on the continent.

14. **Mr. Malmierca** (Cuba) said that neoliberal globalization failed to promote access to technology for all and exacerbated inequity and disparity between the industrialized and the developing countries and between the haves and have-nots. The technology gap between North and South was becoming wider and that trend applied to the information and communication technologies (ICTs). Frequent and impressive breakthroughs in technology would be of little use to the millions of children that lacked schools and the millions of adults who were still illiterate. Information had become merchandise, used and manipulated by those who controlled the media through ever more concentrated corporations.

15. The countries of the South cherished hopes that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Phase II, scheduled to take place in Tunisia in November 2005, would formulate specific and practical solutions that would enable developing countries to integrate into the information society. To that end, developing countries were historically entitled to receive substantial and predictable financial resources from the developed world. Moreover, the United Nations should ensure equitable and balanced dissemination of information through its resource centres. The developing world deserved special treatment. For instance, radio should be favoured as a means of providing information to large illiterate populations.

16. Cuba was subjected to radio and television aggression by the United States of America on a daily basis in disregard of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. As part of an economic, financial and commercial blockade of Cuba, maintained for more than four decades, the United States Government used millions of dollars every year to finance, lead and support broadcasts from its territory encouraging illegal immigration, inciting to civil disobedience and blatantly misrepresenting the Cuban reality. The broadcasting facilities involved used advanced technology, including United States military aircraft, and were directly linked to well-known terrorists based, operating and enjoying full impunity in the United States. The United States Government thereby interfered in Cuba's internal affairs and infringed International Telecommunication Union (ITU) regulations and international law. The Cuban people, however, were a cultured and well-informed nation educated with the Revolution. Although peaceful, it would not allow the United States Government, driven by annexationist ambitions, to violate Cuban sovereignty.

17. **Mr. Christen** (Switzerland) welcomed the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on United Nations public information policies and activities for it set down clear guidelines for the Department of Public Information that took a non-ideological and pragmatic approach. The compromise reached by the Committee on information on the regionalization/rationalization issue, however, was less than satisfactory for it did not give the Department the assistance that would enable it to bear regional specificities in mind as it continued to improve its communication work.

18. The modernization of the library services in both New York and Geneva had proceeded well. Their new motto, "From Collections to Connections", served to affirm a service culture and a willingness to incorporate new library technologies in a gradual, continuous process of updating.

19. Switzerland, with its four national languages, was in favour of multilingualism within the United Nations as a matter of principle and practicality in order to communicate effectively and to use the official languages as widely as possible.

20. He assured the Committee that his delegation would work towards constructive solutions and prevent the Committee on Information from being politicized.

21. **Mr. Patasani** (India) observed that the dynamic leadership of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information had provided a restructured and revitalized Department of Public Information, determined to optimize resources for maximum public impact. As the public voice of the Organization, the Department had met the challenge of communicating to the world the 2005 World Summit process and its outcome. Now the Department must make a concerted effort to meet the special needs of the developing countries in the field of information and

communications technology, given the vast digital divide that deprived many of their people of the benefits of the latest advances. At the same time, however, the traditional media — radio and the press — continued to be basic instruments in those countries in disseminating the main message of the United Nations, which should focus on core issues in social and economic development.

22. The United Nations information centres had a critical role to play in conveying the image of the United Nations and spreading its message to local populations, especially in developing countries. India remained a proponent of the gradual regionalization of the centres, given the need to make the most of scarce resources, as a way of promoting a more effective flow of information and expanding outreach activities.

23. As a leading troop-contributing country, India set great store by the relationship between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and was impressed by the strides the Department of Public Information had made in the past year in overcoming the perceptions of an uninformed public of the realities and successes of peacekeeping operations. The two departments must together devise and pursue a comprehensive communications strategy that highlighted the successes, which, at the very least would encourage countries to contribute troops.

24. The United Nations website was a remarkable success story, as evidenced by the more than one billion users recorded in 2004, and its impressive updating since. United Nations webcasting, particularly in the past year and during the 2005 World Summit, had been noteworthy, and the ongoing incorporation of all official languages in its programming was commendable.

25. The Department's outreach services, particularly its educational work, had fostered awareness of the United Nations action on urgent issues. The *UN Chronicle* deserved special mention, and had been widely consulted in its online version. The Department did well to aim to become a focal point for two-way interaction with civil society on matters of United Nations concern. The recently concluded Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations was a noteworthy case in point.

26. The Department should be encouraged to continue to emphasize performance evaluation by systematically assessing the impact of its work on the public. As it continued to make the United Nations voice heard loud and clear, the Department of Public Information would constantly need to improvise, modernize and reinvent.

27. **Mr. Choisuren** (Mongolia) said that information was a powerful tool in the hands of those who owned it. The overall impact of rapidly developing information technologies, especially the Internet, could be compared only to the invention of radio. Yet the widening digital divide prevented many nations from making the most of the immense opportunities, and the global news covered continued to be controlled mostly by powerful private media catering to the needs and interests of their target audiences in the North. Moreover, the enormous volume of information generated on a daily basis presented a challenge to smaller nations like Mongolia, whose voices might drown in an information ocean.

28. The voice of the United Nations was the voices of all nations combined. Hence the importance of the work of the Department of Public Information which gave objective information on global matters and drew attention to issues often not commercially attractive. The Department should be commended for having completed its reform and redirection under the leadership of the dynamic Under-Secretary-General at its helm. The Department must continue to evolve in the ever-changing information landscape, taking the Millennium Declaration as a guide to achieve greater public impact.

29. Having done excellent work during the preparations for the 2005 World Summit, the United Nations media must focus on promoting its Outcome globally, with special emphasis on the aspect of development.

30. The Department had shown creativity in using different means to spread the message of the Organization. Continued contacts of United Nations officials with the private media and with non-governmental organizations would be crucial in promoting the United Nations in the world, but national Governments also had a role to play in that respect.

31. In collaboration with a number of the specialized agencies, his own Government held weekly awareness-

raising campaigns on ongoing United Nations projects and programmes and their impact on the daily lives of people. It would, for instance, be holding a national conference on the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit Outcome; producing a documentary on Mongolia and the United Nations; and organizing a contest among secondary school students for the best articles and posters on the United Nations. Mongolia believed that the publication of a book for the general public on the major achievements of the United Nations over 60 years would be another valuable addition to the anniversary activities planned by the Department of Public Information.

32. **Mr. Gidor** (Israel) said that it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Department of Public Information (DPI) as the most experienced and energetic partner of the Committee on Information in promoting the noble goals of the Organization. As it struggled to be heard alongside many competing narratives, it was disseminating ideals in a world increasingly suspicious of ideology, and in a way that convinced the alarmingly cynical international media of the sincerity of the United Nations efforts. The Department of Public Information was to be commended for its initiatives in improving communications, designing and maintaining the highly effective and user-friendly United Nations website, and modernizing the United Nations library system.

33. DPI had also done admirable work in facilitating the unprecedented twenty-eighth special session of the General Assembly to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps held in January 2005 and had made an important contribution to the groundbreaking exhibit on the same subject displayed both in New York and Geneva. Israel itself had, for the first time at the United Nations, proposed the inclusion in the agenda of the sixtieth session, under the heading "Promotion of human rights", of an item entitled "Holocaust remembrance". It would be submitting a draft resolution in plenary meeting, sponsored also by Australia, Canada, the Russian Federation and the United States. It would call, inter alia, for an annual United Nations day to commemorate the memories of the victims of the Holocaust, rejecting any form of Holocaust denial, and condemning religious intolerance. Israel considered it to be not merely a statement but an educational initiative, with potential universal application, designed to promote global understanding and mutual tolerance. If the United Nations could assume a greater role in promoting such initiatives, rather than merely providing a forum for international bickering, it would live up to the original ideals of its founding fathers.

34. United Nations mechanisms, including the Department of Public Information, were not immune to cynical exploitation. Despite the improved political climate in the Middle East and the cumulative Israeli gestures of goodwill, for instance, and the efforts of its Under-Secretary-General to introduce more objectivity and even-handedness, his was the only Member State still unfairly singled out for criticism by the Department in various seminars and publications. In Israel's view, the time had come to abolish the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and to put the Department's resources to better use by channelling them towards the goal of peace in the Middle East. It was disheartening that the Department did not have one Israeli employee on its staff, an exclusion that militated against a full understanding of the issues in the region. With the image of the United Nations in the Middle East region at a low point, the United Nations should avoid being the purveyor of anachronistic and unhelpful agendas and give an honest, objective presentation of information.

35. An honest portrayal of the truth depended on free information, and all too often regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere exploited the political situation to suppress their press. The Fourth Committee, supported by the Department of Public of Information, should have no qualms about advocating a free press and condemning oppressive controls. Let Israel illustrate the type of transparency that States could emulate. His Government upheld the principle of free information and its citizens consumed information eagerly, with the Internet — widely used by the 74 per cent of Israeli households with a computer — playing a crucial role in cementing the access to information.

36. Not all Governments, however, used information to further the interests of their own subjects or the ideals of harmony on which the United Nations was founded. The Department and the international community must struggle against the use of Government-supported media and educational establishments to incite to hatred, the fuel that powered terrorism.

37. Israel supported the Department's mandate wholeheartedly and urged it to rise to the enormous challenges that lay ahead.

38. **Mr. Alzayani** (Bahrain) said that the achievements of the Department of Public Information in 2005, inter alia, the activities carried out in the context of its worldwide communications strategy and in the area of human rights, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism, were attributable to its systematic approach in establishing a new culture of evaluation and results-based management. For information to be fully effective, however, it was imperative to narrow the digital divide between the developing and advanced countries and DPI could play a vital role to that end, such as the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITes), the Health InterNetwork and the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force. United Nations information centres also were a significant means of ensuring the free circulation of information on a wide scale and of raising public awareness of the United Nations and its principles, purposes and activities. Further rationalization of those centres in the absence of consultation with the host countries was therefore a cause for concern, particularly in the developing countries, many of which had no advanced ICT capabilities. In such cases, the conventional communications media were the key source of information and consequently should not be overlooked as a means of promoting the information products of the United Nations.

39. The Department's information activities on the question of Palestine, to which Bahrain attached particular importance, would continue in the interest of achieving a just solution to the question.

40. **Mr. Onishchenko** (Ukraine) said that the Department of Public Information (DPI) should play a central role in promoting a positive public image of the United Nations and providing comprehensive and timely information about United Nations activities. He commended the specific steps taken by the Department in the areas of information and communication in order to implement the new strategic goals and structural reforms, and its work relating to the comprehensive development and improvement of the network of United Nations information centres, which were important in maintaining direct contact with local communities. The information component of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine was effective both in presenting a unified image of the United Nations and in enhancing information activities in major areas of the work of the United Nations. Significant improvements had been made to the United Nations website using the latest technology, and he welcomed the Department's initiatives towards further integration of the new information and communication technologies into its communication infrastructure. Commendable efforts had been made to achieve a more modern, highly integrated and efficient system of library services within the United Nations.

41. **Mr. Pato** (Togo) said that new information and communication technologies had enabled the public to watch live coverage of the 2005 World Summit in most countries in the world on the United Nations website. However, many people in developing countries were still cut off from information by poverty and language. For the United Nations information centres to function effectively, they must act in full awareness of local conditions. The information centre for Togo and Benin in Lomé had published documents on human rights, HIV/AIDS and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the two principle languages of Togo, Ewe and Kabye. For some time to come, radio would remain the most effective medium of communication with people living in remote villages, and the Lomé centre had broadcast in the official languages of Togo on national radio. The centre was in close touch with the Governments of Togo and Benin, research institutes, training and education institutions, and was the most useful facility for anyone interested in finding out about the United Nations as it possessed a library and in the near future would have a website. The Government was aware of the importance of information in our time, and Togo had many radio and television channels and a free press. The provision of balanced and objective information strengthened peace and tolerance within communities, and should be promoted.

42. **Mr. Almaabri** (Yemen) said that the United Nations information centre in Sana'a played an important role in disseminating information on the Organization and on recent developments in the Arabian Gulf region, as well as on activities in Yemen, including international and regional conferences that reflected the country's progress in advancing democracy and freedom. He was therefore gratified that the centre was to remain in place and hoped that

the Department of Public Information would take such necessary measures as appointing a director capable of discharging the responsibilities of the task in a region where the reputation of the United Nations was now becoming clouded and distorted.

43. He would appreciate a more equal balance in efforts to make information available in the six official languages. It was essential to give developing countries the opportunity to enhance their information capacities, in particular through training programmes for journalists, information technology transfer, information exchange with more advanced countries, narrowing of the digital divide and the creation of a strategy designed to establish an information balance at the global level. He therefore hoped that practical measures to fulfil such aspirations would be adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

44. **Mr. Sealy** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that world public opinion concerning the United Nations and the global issues with which it dealt was shaped by the relations of the Department of Public Information with the media and civil society and the local channel was the United Nations information centres. The human and financial resources available to the centres were barely adequate to the task, especially in the case of the regional centres. Thus the regional centre in Port of Spain had responsibilities to some 14 island countries which made up CARICOM. As an expression of its political commitment to the work of the centre, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had assumed financial responsibility for the rental of its current office. The Department should adequately underwrite the cost of the UNDP national information officer in Kingston, Jamaica who would be responsible for meeting the information needs of CARICOM countries in the Northern Caribbean. The regular budget should provide adequate funds to cover the activities of the Department.

45. Over the preceding five months the Port of Spain centre had launched a region-wide website; supervised media coverage for the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference held in St. Lucia from 3 to 6 July 2005 and set up bilateral meetings for senior United Nations officials with Heads of Government; promoted media coverage of the centre; organized a Peace Day in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago and a local non-governmental organization; promoted the establishment of a United Nations Association in Belize. Proposed activities included events to commemorate United Nations Day on 24 October, and a media training programme in Port of Spain for 24 regional journalists in collaboration with the United States Embassy.

46. The Department of Public Information had an important role to play in both development and peacekeeping, and it should work more closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In many regions of the globe, radio and the print media were still the fundamental mechanisms for the circulation of information and resources should be made available for the Caribbean Unit of United Nations Radio.

47. **Mr. Marsh** (United States of America) commended the Head Librarian of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and all of her staff for energetically working to position the Library as one of the central information management units of the Secretariat. His delegation looked forward particularly to direct support services aimed at helping staff and delegations carry out their duties, especially in the present environment in which all participants were faced with information overload. The United States was pleased to note that the role of library staff was being broadened to enable them to collaborate more closely with users in their daily work, not only by ensuring that the most relevant and appropriate information was delivered to them when they needed it but also by advising users on which tools to use, and how to use them.

48. His delegation commended DPI for its continuing efforts to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations information centre system. The overall goal remained to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization in order to achieve the greatest public impact. The United States was not convinced that the regionalization and rationalization process would have continued to move forward sufficiently to effect real change even if the UNIC budget had not been cut. In that regard, it wished to point out that the United States decision to reduce the budgetary allocation to the UNIC system had been willingly agreed to by all participants in the negotiations.

49. He wished to respond to the comment by the Under-Secretary-General during the previous day's interactive session that DPI was "the stepchild of the Organization" and was persistently targeted for budget cuts. While, like other departments of the Secretariat, DPI had been subject to intergovernmental review in the context of the budget process, in fact its budget had steadily increased over the past three biennia. In any event, for a variety of reasons the information centre system continued to be in need of further rationalization.

50. He commended DPI for the timely distribution of digital images of United Nations meetings and events, live webcasting of the High-level Plenary, and for working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in ensuring the effective deployment and ongoing functioning of public information components in peacekeeping missions.

51. He said he regretted having once again to respond to a statement made by the Cuban delegation. The United States Government took seriously its international obligations, particularly those under the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) concerning avoidance of harmful interference in the services of other countries; for 46 years the Cuban people had been denied the right to choose their own representatives, to voice their opinions without fear of reprisal, to assemble, or to organize freely.

52. The Cuban government's opposition to Radio and TV Martí was driven by fear of the consequences if the Cuban people were to receive uncensored information about their own country and the world around them. The Castro regime continued to deny the Cuban people their human rights and fundamental freedoms, betrayed them politically, failed them economically, and wronged them by its unrelenting injustice. The United States felt that the Cuban people deserved a government committed to democracy and the full observance of human rights.

53. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolutions A and B contained in chapter IV of document A/60/21, and on the draft decision in the same document (immediately following the two draft resolutions).

54. **Mr. Longhurst** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, suggested that in the penultimate preambular paragraph of draft resolution B, the reference to "resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002" should be changed to "resolution 59/309 of 22 June 2005".

55. *Draft resolution A, draft resolution B as orally amended and the draft decision were adopted.*

56. **Ms. Thomas** (Cuba), in exercise of the right of reply, contradicted the assertion by the representative of the United States of America that there were only two broadcast channels directed at Cuba. In fact, there were 16, 14 of which belonged to organizations that promoted or were directly linked to known terrorist elements operating with total impunity in the territory of the United States of America. Contrary to what the representative of the United States was attempting to convey, that country's aggression via radio and television against Cuba served only to demonstrate the total disdain of its Government for the rules governing international relationships. The Cubans did not desire its broadcasts, and did not need them. Thanks to the revolution, which had provided universal access to education, and made great efforts to provide all people with daily updated information about everything occurring in Cuba and worldwide, Cubans today were educated enough to distinguish the true from the false.

57. It should be understood, once and for all, that Cuba had the revolution it desired, was ready to defend it and was convinced that even if not perfect, it was a thousand times better than what the Government of the United States wished to impose. The slanderous and shameful media war that the United States Government had waged against Cuba, using its habitual lies and not stopping short of interference in Cuba's internal affairs, confirmed once again the demonstrated inability of Washington to learn from the failures which its anti-Cuba policy had suffered, one after another, over more than four decades.

58. Once again, the United States of America, the Government with the least moral authority to speak of the human rights of any country, sought to manipulate that issue to accuse Cuba. It even dared accuse the country that had made the core of its policy the protection of all the rights of all of its population, without any discrimination, whether social or racial. Once again, the representative of the United States of America was raising the issue of "dissidents", whereas the so-called dissidents were in reality mercenaries receiving money and guidance from the Government of the United States. Those paid voices did not represent

the sentiments of the great majority of the Cuban people, and sought to turn their own country into a United States protectorate.

59. However much it disturbed the representatives of the United States, Cuba would continue to denounce, in any necessary forum and on any appropriate occasion, the genocidal embargo policy of that country's Government. At the same time, it would continue its policy of large-scale development of new information and communications technologies, using its modest material and financial resources.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.10

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Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 17 October 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)

Contents

Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

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05-55566 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/60/20 (Supplement No. 20) and Corr.1)

1. **The Chairman** announced that following the three presentations to be made on the item, there would be an interactive dialogue with the presenters.

2. He recalled that at the 2005 World Summit, leaders from around the world had recognized that science and technology were vital for achieving development goals. Space-based technology continued to demonstrate its contribution to ensuring better lives for everyone. It had played a crucial role following many of the natural disasters of the past year, including the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and, most recently, the mudslides and flooding in Southern Mexico and Central America resulting from Hurricane Stan and the devastating earthquake on the border between India and Pakistan. In all cases, satellite images had been used to assess the damage and help rescuers focus on the areas most urgently in need of help. Satellite-based communications had also been used to connect the afflicted areas with the outside world, since terrestrial networks had been all but destroyed.

3. The peaceful uses of outer space could contribute significantly to implementing the Millennium Declaration, as well as the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the World Summit on the Information Society. Space applications could contribute to cost-effective water resource management, as well as to the prediction and mitigation of water-related emergencies. Given the unequal distribution of water resources, space-based solutions to water management were particularly important to developing countries. Tele-education projects in several countries were bringing high-quality education to students and educators at all levels, including those in remote areas of the globe who otherwise would have no access to schools and universities. Similarly, the use of satellite communications in telemedicine made quality public health accessible to the underprivileged in areas that had limited health care.

4. United Nations treaties and principles provided a legal framework that ensured the continued peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind. A growing number of States had realized the benefits of those instruments and were signing and ratifying them. To ensure that the benefits provided by space technology reached all countries, particularly developing countries, international cooperation was crucial. The United Nations, through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, played a pivotal role in ensuring that countries continued to work together to bring the fruits of space activities to people around the world. One example of such cooperation, the International Satellite System for Search and Rescue, known as COSPAS-SARSAT, used space technology to assist aviators and mariners in distress around the globe. It currently had 37 member States, representing every continent, and had rescued over 18,000 persons in more than 5,000 incidents since 1982.

5. The International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" sought to provide a unified system of space data acquisition and delivery. Its seven member agencies provided free, real-time Earth observation images to civil protection authorities responding to major disasters. Since it had become operational in November 2000, it had been activated over 80 times, in response to both natural and man-made disasters. The United Nations system was able to request data from it through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, which cooperated with the Charter.

6. The third Earth Observation Summit had been held on 16 February 2005 in Brussels. It had established a Group on Earth Observations (GEO), consisting of over 50 States and 30 international organizations and had endorsed a 10-year implementation plan that would be the backbone of a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). Such a system would bring together a large number of space and in situ Earth observation resources and datasets currently in use around the world and create a sustainable network for the distribution of data and information products and services. GEOSS would also identify gaps in the acquisition of Earth observation data and facilitate the bridging of such gaps.

7. **Mr. Abiodun** (Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) said that the natural disasters of the past year had dramatically demonstrated the vulnerability of human societies to the forces of nature and the need for redoubled disaster reduction efforts and enhanced disaster response.

8. At the 2005 World Summit, heads of State and Government had reaffirmed their commitment, inter alia, to promoting sustainable development and had recognized the important role that science and technology could play in that regard. In particular, they had committed themselves to supporting research designed to address the special needs of developing countries in the areas of health, agriculture, conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, environmental management, energy, forestry and climate change, to promoting technology transfer; to helping developing countries devise national strategies for human resources, science and development, and to working to establish a global early warning system for all natural hazards. The tools and benefits offered by the use of space would be a key element in meeting those goals.

9. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had long realized that a number of space technologies and applications were available to meet numerous developmental challenges, such as reducing poverty and preventing infectious diseases and environmental degradation. Space applications could provide timely reliable information for decision-making in many areas of economic and social life, as well as reliable communications where ground networks were unavailable or had been destroyed by a disaster.

10. Among its achievements, the Committee on the peaceful uses of outer space had been instrumental in the adoption by the General Assembly of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and had organized three United Nations conferences on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE). The resolution "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development", adopted at UNISPACE III and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/68, outlined a strategy for addressing global challenges and involving space technology in solving some of the most pressing issues on the global development agenda. In October 2004, the General Assembly had conducted a five-year review of the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III and had endorsed a Plan of Action, proposed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, for the further implementation of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development and for the achievement of the targets set by the Millennium Declaration, particularly as articulated in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

11. Drawing attention to the Committee's report (A/60/20 (Supplement No. 20) and Corr.1), he said that during the past year the Committee had considered, inter alia, the following items: implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes, the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee at their 2005 sessions, spin-off benefits of space technology, space and society and space and water.

12. The Committee and its two Subcommittees had devoted a great deal of time to considering the outcomes of the General Assembly's five-year review of the implementation of UNISPACE III recommendations. The action teams created by the Committee had proved to be a unique and useful mechanism for ensuring the implementation of those recommendations. The Committee had agreed to establish a closer link between its work on the implementation of the UNISPACE III recommendations and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It would be transmitting to the Commission's next session a document outlining how space applications could contribute to the Commission's consideration of thematic clusters. The Committee had also included in the agenda for its next session an item on the recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society, to the implementation of which it intended to contribute. Lastly, it had discussed the work of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and he was pleased to note that the Programme was stepping up its efforts to help countries develop and implement new projects as a follow-up to various programme activities.

13. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had begun to consider an item on space-system-based disaster management support. Under a three-year workplan, it would share information on existing national and international space-system-based disaster management systems and would identify the long-term perspectives of Member States and space agencies in that area. Natural disaster management was a huge challenge for the countries concerned and the Subcommittee had therefore examined the possibility of creating an international space coordination entity for disaster management. At its next session, it planned

to hold a one-day workshop on disaster management, involving communication and meteorological satellite operators.

14. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had also continued its work on space debris, under a new workplan for the period 2005 to 2007, and the Working Group on Space Debris had finalized the first draft of a document on space debris mitigation. The Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had made significant progress in its work on issues relating to the establishment of an international, technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of nuclear power sources in space. The Subcommittee had amended the initial workplan for that item, extending it to 2007. At its most recent session, the Subcommittee had organized a symposium with the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) on "High-resolution and hyperspectral satellite data integration for precision farming, environmental monitoring and possible new applications". At its next session, it was to hold a symposium aimed at strengthening its partnership with industry, at which synthetic aperture radar missions and their applications would be discussed. It proposed to include in its agenda a new item on International Heliophysical Year 2007, as a contribution to preparations for that event. Lastly, the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities had reported to the Subcommittee on the results of its 2005 session and had submitted to it for consideration a report on the coordination of space-related activities among United Nations entities and a report on space-related technologies and applications that could enhance inter-agency cooperation. It had held an open informal meeting for Committee members and observers to present various space-related initiatives by United Nations agencies and had updated the brochure "Space solutions" on the use of space technologies in United Nations activities related to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

15. The Legal Subcommittee had established a new Working Group to examine the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects. It had reconvened its Working Group on the preliminary draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment. It had decided to continue to review developments concerning the protocol, but had been unable to reach a consensus on whether the United Nations should serve as the supervisory authority thereunder. It had also re-established the Working Group to consider matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space.

16. Reviewing the benefits derived from the use of space technologies to meet everyday needs, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had agreed that spin-offs of space technology should be promoted because they energized industries through the creation of new and innovative technologies and made significant contributions to improving populations' quality of life. Under the item on space and society, it had focused on space tools for education, while under the item on space and water, it had noted that space applications could contribute to cost-effective water resource management and predict and mitigate water-related emergencies. Lastly, a symposium on "Space and archaeology" had been held. At the Committee's next session, a symposium on space and forests would be held. In conclusion, it was important to consider the evolution of space activities and how the Committee could develop a long-term plan to enhance international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

Presentations and interactive dialogue

17. **Mr. Abiodun** (Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) gave a presentation on "Contributions of space science and technology, to sustainable development challenges", which he illustrated with slides. Sustainable development could be defined as "Satisfying present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" or as "The meeting of fundamental human needs while preserving the life support systems of planet Earth, with the understanding that regional and local needs differ globally". The fundamental life support systems were air, land resources, water, agricultural resources and a wholesome environment. Preservation of those systems was being endangered by anthropogenic and human detrimental impacts on the Earth's environment. The universal view was that without the industrial and agricultural revolutions, planet Earth would still be in equilibrium. Human activities affecting the Earth's climate and environment included toxic emissions from industry, deforestation, the unregulated discharge of domestic and industrial

waste, petroleum-related pollution and population explosion, and the consequences of those activities included global warming due to greenhouse gas effects, ozone depletion, rising sea levels and drought and related desertification. It was also universally accepted that planet Earth was a unified system and that events such as a volcanic eruption in one location, or the recurring El Niño phenomenon, could have repercussions in other parts of the world. The net effect of all those harmful actions was excess carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere, holes in the ozone layer over the North and South Poles and rising global temperatures. One specific result was water scarcity, with once-abundant sources of water drying up. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), water scarcity would be a major issue in the coming 20 years. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Third Water Forum, held in Japan in March 2003, had stated: "To ensure a sustainable water supply of good quality, we should protect and use in a sustainable manner the ecosystems that naturally capture, filter, store and release water, such as rivers, wetlands, forests and soils".

18. The starting point for such action was knowledge. Humankind needed adequate knowledge based on geo-referenced information that was accurate, timely and affordable and could meet the needs of all the issues associated with water supply (by nature) and demand (by humans and other elements within ecosystems). In that connection, General Assembly resolution A/RES/1721 (XVI) had called for a study on measures to advance the state of atmospheric science and technology so as to provide greater knowledge of basic physical forces affecting climate and to develop existing weather forecasting capabilities.

19. The collection, analysis and use of geographic information was thus a starting point for sustainable development, because the poor quality of data collection and management in many societies prevented any meaningful plan of action from being undertaken. Decision-makers must recognize that maps and geospatial data were as much a part of a nation's infrastructure as transportation networks, health care, education, telecommunications and water supply. Accurate maps were needed, for instance, to avoid locating roads, housing and farms in disaster-prone areas. Using a base map in conjunction with a computer allowed geographical referencing of a large array of Earth-observation and satellite data and provided the accurate information needed in many areas of development.

20. Space technology also served sustainable development. Satellite data had many applications in the management of water resources and in disaster reduction and relief. Research by specialized agencies on the stratospheric ozone layer had provided the scientific underpinning for the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments, and data from research satellites had led to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A wide range of national and international satellites and satellite systems were currently providing valuable information about the Earth and its chemical, meteorological and oceanographic life-support systems, as well as data needed for search-and-rescue operations, disaster management or the accurate mapping of wetlands and ocean and coastal resources.

21. Decision-makers, especially in countries without a space capability, should make it their priority to: fund basic and applied scientific and technological research and development in sustainable development fields, both nationally and regionally; translate satellite measurements of radiance into information applicable to real development problems; and establish a space-based network for joint research by national and regional institutions.

22. It was a myth that space science and technology was the exclusive preserve of industrialized countries, when in fact it was an indispensable tool for addressing sustainable development challenges. National talents everywhere should be cultivated and the necessary tools developed. It had long been recognized that without the development of a broad-based indigenous scientific and technological infrastructure, the countries of the South could not simply transfer expertise from abroad.

23. **Mr. Merrell** (Director, Medical Informatics and Technology Applications Consortium, Virginia Commonwealth University), giving a presentation on "Telemedicine and e-Health for International Medical Issues", said that the reality of contemporary medical practice, now that there was simply too much medical information for one trained mind to encompass, was that medical practitioners dealing with patients were trained to become information managers, relying on reliable telecommunications and digitalized

information to support their decisions and follow common standards. Electronic patient health records were also becoming the rule.

24. Since the cost of computing and telecommunications was in fact falling while the cost of delivering traditional medicine was rising at alarming rates, the hope was to apply the economies of the former to strained medical budgets, in order to make health care more affordable and accessible.

25. Telemedicine had come into being with the replacement of print media by electronic media and the use of satellites. His own Consortium had been working for a decade, under a charter with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to set up practical telemedicine systems in remote and hostile environments in 20 developing countries, in which it had been able to test the potential, limits, utility and cost of telemedicine involving use of the Internet, phonelines and low-Earth-orbit and geosynchronous satellites and, working in partnership with their Governments, to integrate those countries into an international continuum of information.

26. The systems thus created had been evolving over time. In Kenya, for example, an infectious disease team working in an area without power but bolstered by a telecommunications team had been able to treat thousands of children with the help of state-of-the-art information at a fraction of the usual costs. In the Dominican Republic, two surgical experts bringing telecommunications equipment had trained local doctors on site in an advanced surgical technique, with excellent clinical results, and had left behind a viable, sustainable surgical programme. In Pakistan, a telemedicine curriculum was being designed in a large urban medical school, which in six months should be able to send independent telemedicine units out into the neighbouring mountains. In the Amazon basin of Ecuador, primary health-care clinics covering a population of 2,000, subsequently integrated with populations in otherwise unreachable areas and linked to secondary surgical and hospital care, had been equipped with simplified electronic record-keeping methods and international Internet and satellite sources of information, with a resulting 70-per-cent success rate in treatment.

27. The Consortium had introduced telemedicine into extreme environments. It had been less of a challenge to do so on Mount Everest or in the Arctic Circle, however, where only a handful of people had been involved. The real complications arose in extreme environments such as the River Danube delta, a waterland without roads, where health systems serving a large population required more complex satellite and telecommunications support.

28. Natural disasters were not well served by telemedicine because the infrastructure for it was not in place. In the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, it had taken three months to set up the requested telemedicine assistance in the country, whereas after Hurricane Katrina, it had taken only four days to assist a digitally equipped NASA facility caring for 4,000 people.

29. Civil disruption was yet another situation in which the Consortium operated. During the break-up of the former Soviet Union, an Internet programme had been set up in the Russian Federation as early as 1995 and telescience and telemedicine courses had been developed. National telemedicine programmes linked to the information available via the Consortium had also been established in Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, all of which offered training and grants. In 1999 in Kosovo, at a time when there had been no working medical system, a telemedicine centre had been set up in conjunction with the European Union and had been the sole source of information for a redeveloping medical faculty and a student body of 2,000. Subsequently, it had established a link to the World Health Organization (WHO) programme of online journals and had been integrated with other hospitals in the province.

30. Telemedicine was thus a tool of technology that could span a digital divide in a responsive, non-disruptive way. It could be tailored to most medical requirements; need not be expensive and could allow a leap-frog approach to medical improvement by bypassing the expenses of traditional health-care delivery. He appealed to United Nations decision-makers to consider telemedicine as an infrastructure upon which to build a healthier world that was enlightened by information, emboldened by effective tools, dignified by empowerment and made one by just and sustainable health programmes.

31. **Mr. Camacho** (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs), presenting a briefing on selected items before the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, explained that regular

items were considered annually, whereas single-issue items appeared on the agenda for one year only unless otherwise decided. Subcommittee workplans involved a proposal from a State or group of States, discussion of the objective and establishment of a programme of work, results being presented for each of the three or four years of its duration. The outcome of that approach was new agenda items. The system allowed continuity, rotation of topics and the movement of some items in and out of the agenda. Draft resolutions would contain certain regular items for as long as a Subcommittee wished to discuss them.

32. One highly technical subject of concern to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee was the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Such sources were needed on satellites for two reasons: to power their instruments when they were too far from the sun for solar panels to function efficiently, and to provide propulsion during deep space missions. It was important that those nuclear power sources should be subject to safety standards, since satellites were launched from and at times came close to Earth. From 2003 to 2006, one objective of the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space was to develop an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of space nuclear power source applications, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). IAEA had been invited to participate and to define specific cooperation mechanisms for developing technical safety standards. In 2005, the Subcommittee had reviewed information from national and regional space agencies and had prepared an outline of the proposed framework. A three-day joint technical workshop was to be held with IAEA in 2006 to discuss potential new safety standards. The Working Group had met and communicated throughout the past year, a list of topics had been agreed and distributed and intersessional work was continuing. The outcome of the joint workshop would be a draft report proposing a number of technical safety standards for discussion at the Committee's June 2006 session.

33. Another highly technical subject of concern to the Subcommittee was space debris. Such debris was a hazard to both vehicles and persons in space. Man-made sources of debris included anything that had been put into orbit and was no longer useful, most debris being pieces smaller than 10 centimetres in diameter or tiny particles. Of the various measures for reducing that type of debris, the most effective was to mitigate the production of new debris, which required agreement both by States and entities with the capability to launch satellites and by States and entities that built or commissioned the building of satellites. The Subcommittee had drawn up multi-year workplans for dealing with the issue. In 2002, the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), a small group of entities capable of launching satellites, had been invited to present proposals to the Subcommittee on the mitigation of debris production. Member States had been invited to comment on the proposals received and the Subcommittee had agreed to work intersessionally and to begin drafting a document on space debris mitigation, while also considering other issues such as the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The process by which the document might be periodically updated would be considered in 2006. Debris-mitigation measures would be voluntary and it was vitally important therefore to encourage involvement and build consensus so that all would be prepared to abide by the agreed measures.

34. Those two issues illustrated a working principle of the Committee, whereby a relatively small number of States and entities such as space agencies worked at a highly technical level in one of the Subcommittees on items that were then presented to a forum, where those directly affected or participating at different levels could influence the eventual recommendations of the Committee or Subcommittee.

35. A new agenda item under the multi-year workplan for 2005 to 2007 was near Earth objects. Such objects were a comet or asteroids in orbit within 0.3 astronomical miles (AU) of Earth and presenting a potential hazard if they were greater than 150 metres in diameter and came within 0.05 AU of Earth. It was currently estimated that there was a 1 in 5,000 probability of a near Earth object named 2004MN colliding with Earth in 2036, the resulting impact being equivalent to a 1,000-megaton nuclear explosion. An international response was necessary and the Subcommittee was studying the different possibilities with a view to taking action in 2013. In 2005, States, international organizations, regional bodies and others would participate in near Earth object research.

36. The Legal Subcommittee had created a legal framework within which States and other entities could conduct their activities in outer space. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/116, the Secretary-

General had sent a letter to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of States that had not yet acceded to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space, as well as to intergovernmental organizations that had not yet declared their acceptance of the rights and obligations under those treaties. The initial response had been encouraging. The Subcommittee had also considered ways of promoting the harmonization of practice in registering space objects. The outcome had been positive, eliciting an increased flow of registration documents for previously unregistered objects, the establishment of more national registries and increased provision of information under General Assembly resolution 1721 B (XVI).

37. **Mr. Sen** (India) said that it was important to highlight the benefits of the application of space-based technologies. Since establishing a satellite-based early warning system for cyclones, for example, his Government had been able greatly to reduce the number of victims. The use of satellite technology had helped locate fish stocks and improve catches by several hundred per cent, while its use in resource mapping had, inter alia, achieved a 90-per-cent success rate in predicting where to drill for water. Products used in India's health sector, such as coronary stents and ultra-light equipment for handicapped children, were also by-products of missile technology.

38. Although technical mastery of the relevant space technologies was important, it was equally important to share the benefits of their applications. His Government had developed a connectivity mission in cooperation with the African Union, but had only limited resources available for that project. The international community must mobilize resources to ensure that space technology was used to promote development and to implement the Millennium Development Goals, and should concentrate not only on preventing the weaponization of outer space but also on ensuring greater access to space technologies and their benefits, including dual-use technologies.

39. **Mr. González** (Chile) welcomed the opportunity for an interactive dialogue on the item, which was very important for developing countries. Outer space could not be the exclusive preserve of countries that had space programmes, given the tremendous benefits potentially offered by space technology to even the most disadvantaged countries in areas such as natural disaster preparedness, telemedicine and education. The organization of practical information sessions such as the current one should be replicated by all the Main Committees of the General Assembly, in the context of reform of the United Nations aimed at increasing its efficiency and effectiveness.

40. He noted the development of telemedicine in the United States and Europe, but wondered whether the international community as a whole truly had access to it. He requested more information on the costs and accessibility of telemedicine in isolated regions, since it was important that such technology should be not only available but financially accessible.

41. In the context of regional efforts to promote space cooperation mechanisms, he recalled that the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas was to be held in Quito, Ecuador, in July 2006. In that context, he looked forward to the report of Colombia, as pro tempore secretariat of the Fourth Conference, on the organization of that Conference and related follow-up (A/AC.105/L.261), as well as to further information from the Government of Ecuador on the status of preparations for the Fifth Conference. His Government was to host a preparatory meeting for the Fifth Conference, with a focus on education in the context of natural disasters, which would be attended by a representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Regrettably, despite earlier promises to the contrary, the Director of the European Space Agency (ESA) would not attend. That was indicative of the relative lack of cooperation between technically advanced countries and countries that were less so.

42. He noted the contribution which the Government of India had made and was continuing to make in applying space technologies. It would be worthwhile for that Government to be invited not only to the preparatory meeting in Chile but also to the Fifth Conference in Quito to share its expertise in the practical application of space technologies. Lastly, he requested that the expert group established by the First Space Conference of the Americas be granted permanent observer status with the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

43. **Mr. Gallardo** (Peru) welcomed the new emphasis on using space technologies to address such problems as climate change and natural disasters. He wondered whether the benefits of space technologies had been highlighted during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in Kobe. The report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and

Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) (A/59/174) had highlighted the need to increase decision-makers' awareness of the benefits of space technology. He wondered whether there had been any signs of increased awareness in that regard.

44. Like the representative of Chile, he welcomed the opportunity for an interactive dialogue but noted that, at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, discussions of the benefits of space technology and on the outcomes of UNISPACE III had been poorly attended. It was therefore important to increase the issue's visibility, particularly the peaceful international use of space, which some countries did not necessarily consider to be in their best interest.

45. **Mr. González** (Chile) expressed regret that the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, in noting the importance of science and technology for development, did not contain a single reference to space technology, which could play a vital role in such areas as natural disaster prevention, distance education and telemedicine. It was clear that the United Nations and Member States were failing in their obligation to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

46. **Mr. Abiodun** (Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) recalled that little attention had been devoted to the possible applications of space technology to sustainable development, other than at UNISPACE III. At the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, in the context of the implementation of UNISPACE III recommendations, a special plenary meeting had been held to increase awareness of the benefits of space technology and action teams had been established for each of the recommendations. A successful press conference had been held, but the panel discussion on UNISPACE III had been poorly attended.

47. It was clear that although large sums were being invested in space technology and its practical applications and developing countries were also being asked to invest in such technology, little had been done to highlight actual examples of its use. In consultation with the Director of the Office of Outer Space Affairs, he had resolved to make an effort to use the current meeting to provide Committee members with a practical demonstration of the benefits of space technology in everyday life. Such efforts would continue, in the context of both the Fourth Committee and the plenary General Assembly.

48. **Mr. Merrell** (Director, Medical Informatics and Technology Applications Consortium, Virginia Commonwealth University), responding to the representative of Chile concerning the underutilization of telemedicine, said that the health-care sector in the United States and Europe had a highly developed information infrastructure. Once medical information was available in an electronic format, it was easy to transmit. Unfortunately, the technology necessary to transmit such information to remote areas where ordinary telephone links did not exist and where the use of satellite technology would be required was very costly. While the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) had been very successful in allocating satellite band widths to help transmit medical information for the benefit of the population, costs in other regions could be prohibitive. In South America, for example, the cost of satellite dish technology could be 20 or 30 times higher than in the United States, assuming that technology was available and there was an appropriate regulatory body to oversee its use. He expressed frustration that while the media were able to use satellite technology to send out reports in the event of natural disasters, there did not seem to be a similar commitment to investing in satellite technology for telemedicine purposes.

49. **Mr. Camacho** (Director, Office of Outer Space Affairs), responding to the representative of India, noted the Indian Government's success in allocating resources to natural disaster prevention and mitigation systems that had been highly effective in reducing the number of victims, thereby demonstrating the importance of being proactive and allocating resources to preventive and warning systems that did not have a high public profile precisely because they were functioning quite well, rather than simply allocating enormous resources for assistance after a disaster occurred.

50. With regard to the statements by the representatives of Chile and Peru, he agreed that it was important to increase decision-makers' awareness of the benefits of space technology and that it was regrettable that meetings on that issue at the fifty-ninth session had been poorly attended. He recalled that his Office had always supported the Space Conference of the Americas, which had become a well-established forum for the discussion of space issues and was of benefit to the region. It was important to continue to exchange information and technology at the regional and interregional levels, including through South-South cooperation.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.11

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 October 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Gerts (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Netherlands)

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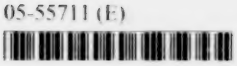

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Gerts (Netherlands), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/60/20)

1. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, the Stabilization and Association Process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the major advances made in space exploration and use could contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well as the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in particular through Earth observation and telecommunications.

2. In February 2005 the European Commission had organized an international conference to explore cooperation between space-faring and non-space-faring countries in the development of global services such as positioning, Earth observation and access to information. The outcome of that conference had helped the European Union, in cooperation with the European Space Agency (ESA), create a space programme which would meet the need for international cooperation. The ENVISAT satellite, of ESA, the largest satellite ever built for Earth observation purposes, provided environmental, weather and climate protection services to more than 90 States. The ENVISAT user conference held in September 2004 in Salzburg had underlined the success of those applications.

3. The European Union remained a strong advocate of the universally accepted right of all States to explore outer space for the benefit of all mankind and stressed the responsibility of States to ensure that that right was exercised in the interests of international peace and security. It therefore welcomed the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) (A/60/20). Following the successful review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) in 2004, COPUOS should continue to make progress in the development of a worldwide environmental monitoring strategy; protection of the environment and resource management; use of global navigation satellite systems to support sustainable development; telemedicine; and optimal use of space-based services for disaster management.

4. The European Union approved the method for establishing priorities within the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The action teams under the voluntary leadership of Member States had proved to be an effective mechanism for initiating implementation, that work was very important and should continue.

5. As more and more countries became involved in space activities, and given the unique characteristics of the space environment and space technology, it was essential to tackle complex issues. For example, in response to the increasing commercialization of outer space, the Office for Outer Space Affairs should continue its yearly workshops on space law. Furthermore, in order to address the problem of the increasing pollution caused by space debris, implementation of the space debris mitigation guidelines formulated by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) should continue and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should proceed with its initiative to develop a complementary set of mitigation guidelines.

6. Continued international cooperation in the field of space science and technology was essential. The European Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative, had demonstrated the increasing need for international cooperation. Such initiatives contributed to achievement of the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development by improving people's lives and conserving natural resources. The adoption of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) 10-year implementation plan by 60 Governments and the European Commission in February 2005 had been a key event in that connection. Furthermore, in recognition of the importance of space technology for navigation, geopositioning and time synchronization, the European Union was developing the Galileo system, which, as a result of negotiations with the United States of America would be coordinated with the Global Positioning System (GPS) to strengthen and improve the use of civil satellite navigation worldwide.

7. ESA was playing an important role; it had cooperated with the European Union to develop

Galileo and GMES, and continued to promote the development of European space activities based on the common European strategy for space. It also played a worldwide role, for example in connection with UNISPACE III, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the International Space Station.

8. **Mr. Ma** Xinmin (China) said his delegation attached great importance to expanded international cooperation in activities related to the peaceful uses of outer space. While progress had been made in that regard, there were daunting challenges arising from the ever-expanding military uses of outer space, the increasing danger of its weaponization, and continuing research into and testing of space weapons, in violation of the principle of the peaceful use of outer space and the spirit of the Space Millennium Declaration adopted at UNISPACE III. COPUOS could count on his delegation's full support in its efforts to prevent the militarization and weaponization of outer space and develop a comprehensive and effective legal mechanism in that regard.

9. Turning to the preliminary draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment, he said that in order to ensure a positive role for the funding scheme provided for in the draft protocol, it was essential to conduct an in-depth study of the relationship between the protocol and the current legal regime on outer space, especially the interactive relationship between the two in actual operations. With regard to the possibility of the United Nations serving as supervisory authority, his delegation took note of the concerns of certain delegations and supported further consideration of that matter by the COPUOS.

10. His delegation attached great importance to the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, and had actively participated in the work of the relevant action teams. It supported the creation of an international entity to coordinate and optimize the use of space-based services for disaster management, which would help developing countries, in particular, minimize human and material losses caused by natural disasters.

11. China had made great progress in the realm of space technology and space science research in the past year. The polar orbit satellite Tan Ce 2 and scientific experiment satellites such as the Shi Jian 6, A and B, satellites had been launched and the Shen Zhou VI manned spacecraft carrying two astronauts had successfully completed its five-day flight. His Government had also strengthened and expanded bilateral and regional cooperation. Over the next 10 years it would focus on the development of large-capacity, high-performance and long-life broadcast communication satellites. Research and development would be undertaken on a new generation of non-toxic, non-polluting, high-performance and low-cost delivery rockets, with a view to creating an Earth observation satellite system to monitor disasters and the environment composed primarily of a meteorological satellite series, a resource satellite series and ocean satellite series and a small-satellite constellation capable of continuous all-weather operations and high resolution. Study of the solar system and the Earth would continue as would manned space flights. A lunar orbiting flight project and deep space exploration project would also be launched.

12. Space science and technology and their applications played a growing role in the sustainable development of human society and could expedite economic and social development, especially in the developing countries. As a developing space-capable nation, China was willing to strengthen international cooperation and make its contribution to sustainable social and economic development at the global and regional levels.

13. **Ms. Holguin** (Colombia) reaffirmed her Government's commitment to the broadest cooperation in the use of space technology and stressed the need to accord priority to the transfer of knowledge and technology. She expressed concern about the possibility of an arms race in outer space, especially given the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. One important area for the application of space technology was the prediction and prevention of natural disasters through the improvement of early warning systems. Her Government supported the idea of establishing an international entity for global coordination of disaster response services. That would be in keeping with Member States' responsibility to improve the quality of life of current and future generations and protect the environment.

14. Her Government had hosted the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas in 2002, and looked forward to the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas to be held in July 2006 in Ecuador. Since 2002, her

Government had promoted regional cooperation in the application of space science and technology and the implementation of the Cartagena Declaration and Plan of Action, in particular with regard to education and training in the use of space technology. Seminars had also been organized in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and national bodies, most recently in September 2005 in Bogotá on the subject of satellite navigation applications. Work was also proceeding towards the establishment of a Colombian space committee.

15. She welcomed the proclamation of 2007 as International Geophysical and Heliophysical Year and recalled that in cooperation with United Nations Programme on Space Applications, her Government was developing an instrument to analyse the use of the geostationary orbit. She expressed concern at the near saturation of the geostationary orbit, use of which must be rationalized and made accessible to all countries, whatever their current technical capabilities, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union and taking into account the needs of the developing countries.

16. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic), referring to the report of COPUOS (A/60/20), highlighted the views expressed concerning the involvement of more countries in international cooperation in outer space; support for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications; the importance of remote sensing technology for sustainable development; resolution of the problem of space debris; and the role of space technology in the prediction, monitoring and mitigation of natural disasters in order to ensure a better preparedness for response. He also welcomed the convening of the symposium entitled "Space and archaeology" in June 2005. Work on the peaceful uses of outer space for the economic and scientific benefit of the human race was moving in a positive direction. He was nevertheless concerned by the continuing existence of programmes for the militarization of space and the use of outer space for purposes that were incompatible with global development and peace. It was therefore imperative that the international community should remain genuinely committed to the ongoing development of a clear legal framework to ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes only.

17. **Mr. Alvarez** (Cuba) said that his delegation commended China's successful launch of the Shenzhou-6 spacecraft. Outer space was of growing importance to improvement of the quality of life. Remote sensing and telecommunications had become indispensable in agriculture, education, environmental protection, natural resources management and navigation systems. Experiments carried out under microgravity conditions were an important component of scientific development. Meteorological observation from satellites mitigation was contributing to improved weather forecasting and the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters such as hurricanes, as well as efforts to address the devastating effects of climate change.

18. Three main principles should govern the activities of States in the exploration and use of outer space. The first was the necessity of maintaining outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes, while enhancing international cooperation and the economic growth and sustainable development of all countries. That included the necessary transfer of advanced space technology by the more developed countries to the less developed, to bridge the gap between them. In that regard, Cuba rejected the attempts to amend the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, which did not take into consideration the interests of all States, and of developing countries in particular.

19. Second, Cuba was firmly opposed to the unleashing of an arms race in outer space, which would not only violate the principle of its being a common heritage of mankind, but would also gravely jeopardize collective security. The matter became all the more urgent as new military doctrines were put forward involving the development and deployment of new and costly weapons of destruction intended to promote the hegemonic domination of the most powerful over the rest of the inhabitants of the planet. His delegation reiterated its deep concern that some nuclear Powers, which were also spacefaring nations, were continuing to block the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, on the development of an international instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space. The recommendation that, as a first practical step, States should agree to a moratorium on the deployment of weapons in outer space was therefore crucially important.

20. Third, Cuba agreed with the view that the existing legal regime was inadequate to ensure the prevention of an arms race in outer space. There was

thus an urgent need to adopt new mechanisms for the monitoring and verification of space law.

21. Cuba favoured strengthening COPUOS and its two Subcommittees, and believed that States should be encouraged to become observers or members. It attached special importance to the development of strategies aimed at minimizing the possible consequences of space debris. Greater attention must also be paid to collisions of space objects, particularly those with nuclear power sources. At the same time, there must be a determination of responsibility for adverse events. The strengthening of international and regional cooperation in the area of space research was of vital importance; such cooperation could be neither privatized nor restricted to a small group of developed States.

22. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that the use of outer space and the application of space technologies to promote sustainable development were important areas for international cooperation. Kazakhstan was in a position to cooperate actively because of its space launching pad in Baikonur and its participation in various international space projects that included the use of science and technology for the protection of the environment. Kazakhstan was also working with the Russian Federation on space and aviation technology and remote sensing. Furthermore, under its 2005-2007 national programme for the development of space activities, it had begun to build domestic spacecraft, and planned to develop a national geostationary communications and rebroadcasting satellite, KAZSAT, by the end of the year. Together with the Russian Federation, it was involved in a larger project to build a space rocket complex, "Baiterek", by 2008, and was considering building another space complex, "Ishim", to launch smaller spacecraft for civilian applications. Furthermore, it continued to work with the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the "Clipper-Zenith" piloted space shuttle, using the Baikonur infrastructure.

23. The global nature of environmental disasters — such as those in the Aral Sea and the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, or the natural disasters that had recently occurred elsewhere — required a radically new approach by the international community. Although grateful to the specialized agencies and donor countries for their assistance in the Aral Sea and Semipalatinsk regions, Kazakhstan believed that multilateral cooperation could be more effective, and it was therefore proposing a draft resolution on the rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region.

24. His delegation welcomed the recommendations in the COPUOS report relating to the development of regional and interregional cooperation, in particular regarding the establishment of regional space science and technology training centres under the auspices of the United Nations; the application of space systems to disaster management and environmental monitoring; remote sensing by satellite; and the proclamation of 2007 as the International Geophysical and Heliophysical Year. COPUOS should maintain its leading role in efforts to enhance space activities for peaceful purposes and the development of space law.

25. **Mr. Chaimonekol** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed appreciation for the work of COPUOS in maintaining and advancing international cooperation in peaceful uses of outer space. As well as enriching fundamental knowledge of the universe, space science and technology could also guide humanity towards a deeper understanding of its own world. ASEAN took note of the recommendations and decisions in the report of COPUOS (A/60/20), particularly those relating to implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

26. Recognizing the need for regional and interregional cooperation in maintaining outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes, ASEAN had undertaken many intra-ASEAN projects, as well as projects involving other partners. The intra-ASEAN projects laid particular emphasis on exchange of knowledge and expertise through the ASEAN Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications (SCOSA). At its 12th meeting, held in Indonesia on 5 and 6 August 2005, SCOSA had adopted new projects aimed at capacity-building and strengthening cooperation among ASEAN countries. ASEAN was continuing its efforts to promote the use of space technology for disaster detection, prevention, relief and rehabilitation. Singapore's Centre for Remote Imaging, Sensing and Processing (CRISP) had been closely involved in those efforts and, in June 2004, it had organized an ASEAN workshop on oil spill detection and monitoring, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

27. Cooperation between ASEAN and its dialogue partners, particularly Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, had been covering such areas as urban environment identification, farming and water resources management. In addition, ASEAN was pleased with its emerging cooperation with India and hoped to develop a medium-term work programme with India on space technology cooperation. ASEAN attached no less importance to its cooperation with other partners, such as COPUOS, the Group on Earth Observations, the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites and the Asia-Pacific Advanced Network. In cooperation with the Malaysian Centre for Remote Sensing, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and ESCAP, ASEAN had jointly organized a workshop on Disaster Reduction through Effective Space Technology Utilization in the Asia Pacific Region, held in Kuala Lumpur on 24 and 26 May 2005, which had contributed to cooperation in the sharing of data on forest fires. ESCAP and his own Government had jointly hosted the Expert Meeting on Space Applications for Disaster Management between 25 and 28 July 2005 in Chiangmai, Thailand, aimed at reviewing the space-generated products and services that could support regional disaster management mechanisms. In addition, Malaysia and Thailand were in process of launching their national satellites, in 2005 and 2007 respectively.

28. As economic growth, social progress and cultural development in South-East Asia were cornerstones of ASEAN, it fully supported the maintenance of the peaceful uses of outer space as a way of empowering peoples and economies. ASEAN also supported continued international cooperation in identifying new areas where space technologies could be applied to sustainable development, particularly in the fields of telemedicine, education, natural resource management and disaster mitigation. ASEAN took note with great satisfaction of the concern of COPUOS to assist developing countries, which had led to the endorsement of a programme of workshops, training courses, symposia and conferences planned for 2005. ASEAN also believed that space science and applications should be restricted to peaceful uses that contributed to the advancement and common goals of mankind. While a distinction should be made between the peaceful uses of outer space being discussed in the Fourth Committee and the disarmament aspects being discussed in the First Committee, information-sharing and proper coordination between the two Committees were vital, given the interrelated nature of their tasks.

29. No country in the world was immune from natural disasters, which seemed to be increasing at an alarming rate. It was now quite apparent that humanity had to stand resolute and united, redoubling its efforts towards disaster prevention and preparedness. Work should continue on the use of available space technology to strengthen and link existing regional early warning systems. The possibility should also be explored of setting up a comprehensive global early warning system, and further work should be done to develop existing technology for tele-education to disseminate information, and promote disaster management, and preparedness. ASEAN was therefore encouraged by the request of COPUOS, in paragraph 57 of its report, that the ad hoc expert group should finalize the draft study on disaster management. ASEAN, for its part, had improved its response to disasters and was creating early warning systems to complement and contribute to the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System being developed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

30. **Ms. Meyer** (Canada) said that her Government strongly supported the use of space by all nations for peaceful purposes; space represented an increasingly valuable resource in many sectors and must be protected so that its benefits would continue to accrue to all. Her Government was involved in a number of initiatives aimed at sharing the benefits of outer space, including the Geoscience for Andean Communities Project and the provision of satellite images to assist navigators in staying clear of drifting ice.

31. All States which had not yet done so should ratify or accede to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty). States should also consider extending the partial weapons ban found in that Treaty, as suggested by the Prime Minister of Canada during his address to the General Assembly in 2005. In that regard, she called for the establishment of "crosswalks" between the space-related work of the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly. Likewise, COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament must work together more closely on issues relating to outer space.

32. She welcomed the progress made at the most recent session of COPUOS, in particular the consensus reached by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the adoption of guidelines for the mitigation of orbital debris, in the context of a multi-year workplan. While the workplan did not address the concerns of all participating States, it was a major step forward in ensuring safe and secure access to outer space for all.

33. **Mr. Jaafar** (Malaysia) said that his Government was developing its own space capacity, within its limited means and was mindful of the potential of space technology to benefit developing countries. It was actively involved in regional cooperative endeavours and, at the international level, had been a leader of the action team on space-based communication services. Closer international cooperation between developed and developing countries was essential, especially in the transfer of technology and in technical assistance, in order to narrow the digital divide. Donor countries should, for instance, give more support to the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, which was helping the developing countries to participate in the space activities proposed at the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III).

34. The issue of space debris remained a major cause of concern to Malaysia, especially as advances in technology made the introduction of defensive weapons into outer space a possibility. Such a development would not only exacerbate unimaginably the threat of space debris but would seriously undermine international efforts to ensure the continued peaceful use of outer space. An international legal agreement should be drawn up to prohibit the deployment of weapons in outer space.

35. The major natural disasters of recent years underscored the urgency of using space technology to predict, monitor and mitigate them, and space-based early warning systems, particularly, should be made accessible to developing countries at risk. Malaysia itself had been awakened to the need for disaster preparedness by the recent Indian Ocean tsunami, and expected soon to have an operational warning system, as well as a forest fire management plan utilizing remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS) technologies.

36. As to its own development of space science and technology, Malaysia was working with the Republic of Korea on a second Earth observation satellite, RazakSAT, scheduled to be launched by the end of 2005, with a mission control centre being built to support its operation and with the national remote sensing centre, currently receiving data from various other satellites, as the main receiving station. Malaysia was also setting up a national observatory and was developing space-based telemedicine and tele-education programmes. In addition, a Malaysian astronaut would soon be launched into space under a joint programme with the Russian Federation focusing on science and education. His Government had set a five-year time frame for continued development of space technology infrastructure, which would allow it to contribute to regional initiatives and share knowledge with suitable partners in the region.

37. Malaysia was seriously committed to the work of COPUOS and its Subcommittees as they promoted the peaceful uses of outer space and the use of space technology for the benefit of the world's people. That was the motivation for its interest in the chairmanship of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

38. **Ms. Lyubalina** (Russian Federation) said that peaceful activity in outer space must be regulated on a multilateral basis, and that the leading role of the United Nations, and in particular COPUOS, in developing a political and legal basis for human activity in outer space should be preserved and strengthened. The effectiveness and efficiency of the work of COPUOS and its Subcommittees must be enhanced.

39. Her delegation wished to stress the need for outer space to be used for exclusively peaceful purposes. It was unacceptable to turn outer space into an arena for armed confrontation and an arms race. Her delegation called upon Member States to take full advantage of the unique potential of COPUOS to give comprehensive consideration to issues associated with maintaining outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes.

40. The Russian Federation confirmed its commitment to the progressive development of space law, and once again drew attention to its initiative for the development of a comprehensive convention on international space law within the framework of COPUOS, which had already been endorsed by a number of Member States. The adoption of such a

convention would make it possible to adapt international law governing activity in outer space to current realities and needs. The need to codify that branch of the law was becoming increasingly obvious in view of the expansion of human activities in outer space.

41. **Mr. Khudair** (Iraq) said that COPUOS had assumed an important role in focusing on the peaceful use of outer space and the harnessing of space technology to improve conditions on Earth, particularly where implementation of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development and the recommendations of UNISPACE III was concerned. In that context, he was confident that the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Inter-Agency meeting on Outer Space Activities, to be held in Paris in January 2006, and the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, would contribute further to the positive steps being taken to coordinate activities relating to the beneficial use of space technology for the human race. Now in a new era as a fledgling democracy, Iraq shared the same concerns as its fellow developing countries and was eager to benefit fully from the information provided by space technology, not least in the area of sustainable development. It was therefore essential to extend the benefits of space technology to all developing countries, irrespective of their political and economic systems and cultural background, with a view to bridging the widening digital divide and countering the growing protectionist trend and selectivity in connection with the transfer of technology to the developing countries.

42. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) observed that over the past year COPUOS and its Subcommittees, ably supported by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, had made a substantial contribution to promoting international space cooperation, an accomplishment that was a fitting tribute to the over four decades during which COPUOS had served as the only standing body of the United Nations concerned exclusively with the peaceful uses of outer space, and the sharing of benefits from space exploration.

43. Over the course of 2005, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had made significant progress in identifying options for establishing an international framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned nuclear-power-source applications in space. The joint workshop to be held by the Subcommittee and the International Atomic Energy Agency concurrently with the Subcommittee's 2006 session, should help to determine how to proceed in developing that framework. The Subcommittee had also made significant progress on space debris mitigation, having agreed on a two-year workplan to develop a document based on the IADC space debris mitigation guidelines. The IADC guidelines were solid, technically based measures that any nation could adopt as part of its space activities; the development of voluntary guidelines within COPUOUS was, of course, also useful. The United States supported the IADC orbital debris mitigation guidelines, and its agencies were well along in implementing them. The Subcommittee had, further taken a welcome decision to follow the preparations for the International Geophysical and Heliophysical Year, which would be a truly international endeavour focusing worldwide attention on the need to cooperate in solar-terrestrial physics.

44. The Legal Subcommittee had also made progress on a range of topics, including developments relating to a possible space assets protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment. Private activities in space had become increasingly important in recent years, and such a protocol would facilitate commercial financing for space activities. The Subcommittee had, in addition, advanced in its review of the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects on the United Nations Registry established under the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, with a view to identifying the common elements.

45. The June 2005 session of COPUOS had made substantial progress in considering the spin-off benefits of space exploration, as well as the greater role it could play in promoting international cooperation to ensure that outer space was maintained for peaceful purposes. It had also focused usefully on the question of space and society, with a special emphasis on education of the general public.

46. In connection with the draft resolution on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, his delegation noted that the Group of Asian States had yet to nominate candidates for the Bureau of COPUOS for 2006-2007. It urged the Bureau to ensure that the Group submitted its nominations for inclusion in the draft resolution, so that the Committee and its Subcommittees, would be able to begin their work on time at their next sessions.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Gujadhur (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mauritius)

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Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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05-55960 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan), Mr. Gujadhur (Mauritius), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/60/20 and Corr.1)

1. **Mr. Loedel** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of MERCOSUR and its associated States, said that, since space technology played an essential role in the life of mankind, it was important to develop space law and ethics on the peaceful uses of outer space. The international community must commit itself to the peaceful and rational use of outer space, which was the common heritage of mankind, for the development and well-being of current and future generations. Regrettably, despite the progress that had been made in the area of space technology, much of the world's population still did not benefit from, or was not even aware of, the potential of such technology.

2. In order to ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes, taking into account, in particular, the needs of the developing countries, the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) must be implemented, and international space law, including treaties relating to the practical peaceful applications of space science and technology, should be further developed.

3. It was particularly important to implement the UNISPACE III recommendations regarding universal access to space-based communication services, the use of space technology for sustainable development, innovative funding mechanisms and the execution of experimental projects. He welcomed the identification by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of priority areas such as disaster management, tele-education and telemedicine, environmental protection, the management of natural resources, and education and training, including research in basic space sciences and space law. He also stressed the importance of the work of the Legal Subcommittee and of the existing international treaties relating to outer space.

4. It was important to promote the establishment of regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms and he welcomed the establishment in 2002, at the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas, of a regional space cooperation and coordination body. MERCOSUR and its associated countries looked forward to the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas to be held in Ecuador in 2006. Those conferences were examples of peaceful cooperation among nations in ensuring that space technology benefited all mankind, without distinction between developed and developing countries.

5. **Mr. Song** Se Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) stressed that outer space was a common possession of humankind and should not be the exclusive possession of any one State; its exploration should contribute to the well-being of all humankind. Member States must therefore oppose the monopolization of outer space and ensure that the wide-ranging applications of space science and technology were shared by all. Any attempt to prevent the developing countries from sharing in the exploration of outer space could not be tolerated.

6. Member States should oppose the militarization of outer space; his delegation condemned any attempt to militarize outer space, for example through the development of a missile defence system, in order to prevent an arms race in space, preserve world peace and ensure the peaceful exploration of outer space. A binding international legal regime was needed to prevent the militarization of outer space. His Government would actively promote cooperation with the international community, including the United Nations and other States, to ensure the peaceful uses of outer space and would independently develop space science and technology.

7. **Mr. Mahajan** (India) welcomed the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Thailand as new members of the Committee on the Peaceful uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

8. Recent natural disasters and their attendant human tragedies were reminders of the urgent need for an integrated global disaster management system. Disaster management was one of several priority themes covered in the United Nations Programme on Space Applications that were of the utmost importance to the developing countries. His delegation supported the recommendation of the action team on disaster management concerning the establishment of an international space coordination organization for disaster management, and hoped that its functions

would be organized under the umbrella of the United Nations in order to ensure universal access. Welcoming the ongoing interest of the Legal Subcommittee in the draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment, he noted that Member States held widely varying views as to whether the United Nations should act as the supervisory authority for the protocol.

9. His country had always endeavoured to put the latest space technology at the service of its most deprived people and to that end the following programmes had been undertaken over the past year. An exhibition, "India in Space", had been organized during the forty-eighth session of COPUOS; it illustrated how a developing country could use space technology to alleviate social and economic conditions at home and abroad. The first operational launch of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle had taken place on 20 September 2004, and the satellite, EDUSAT, was dedicated exclusively to supporting satellite-based educational networks nationwide. The ninth operational launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle had taken place on 5 May 2005; that satellite interacted with two other satellites with applications in cartography and amateur radio operation. In addition to the remote-sensing applications programme, the Indian Space Research Organization was pursuing three new programmes covering tele-education, telemedicine and village resource centres (VRC). An International Telemedicine Conference organized in Bangalore in March 2005 had been attended by 550 delegates from 40 countries. The VRC pilot project based on interactive VSAT-based networks had been inaugurated in October 2004. There was great scope for its application in a country with some 600,000 villages, and initial results had been very encouraging.

10. International cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, was an important component of India's space programme. A connectivity mission had been launched during the year between India and the countries of the African Union, under which 53 nations would be linked through a satellite and fibre-optic network, a project which was currently being studied by the African Union. In addition to effective communication and connectivity between nations, the link would give rural connectivity to the Pan-African Union, thus providing democratic access and empowerment.

11. India had been an active member of COPUOS since its inception and participated in a variety of global cooperative programmes. It was a member of the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", hosted a Mission Control Centre for the international search and rescue satellite system, and supported the United Nations-affiliated Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Asia and the Pacific, based in Dehradun and Ahmedabad. Since 1995 it had provided some $5 million for infrastructure and it had funded an annual recurring expenditure of $1 million in kind and direct grants-in-aid.

12. **Mr. Gidor** (Israel) said that Israel was extremely proud of its work in the field of space exploration, shared the United Nations objectives of securing, promoting and broadening the peaceful use of outer space, and had held COPUOS observer status since February 2003. Space-related activities corresponding to the stated agenda of COPUOS included the work of the Israeli Space Agency (ISA), established in 1983 within the framework of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

13. In September 1988, Israel had launched the satellite OFEQ-1 by means of the SHAVIT launcher. Both the satellite and the launcher were advanced technological products developed in Israel, which had thus become one of the few nations currently capable of producing, launching, and operating its own satellites. A new line of commercial satellites named EROS (Earth Remote Observation System), which had been developed in collaboration with a United States company, had been launched in December 2000. AMOS, the Israeli geostationary satellite for the Middle East and Eastern Europe, had been launched on a European Ariane-4 launcher in May 1996, and a scientific micro-satellite TECHSAT had been launched from a ZENITH platform in July 1998. There were currently five Israeli-made satellites orbiting the Earth.

14. The focus of Israeli research was in certain niches — in particular small sophisticated satellites, space propulsion, global positioning systems for ground applications and satellite-based technologies such as remote sensing — and in building cost-effective infrastructure.

15. The aims of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development were not only laudable but achievable. Recent natural disasters had demonstrated that greater efforts must be urgently deployed to

promote understanding of the environment, and Israel had played an active role in international cooperation to that end by initiating a series of research programmes.

16. His delegation wholeheartedly and actively supported the Committee's quest to develop solutions for various water-resource problems. As part of his country's policy of collaborating with other leading space-exploring nations, the Israeli Space Agency had recently signed an agreement with its French counterpart, under which a research mission would come into operation by the end of 2008 within the framework of the European Global Monitoring for Environmental and Security programme (GMES programme). The mission would be aimed at demonstrating the efficiency of optimized multi-spectral observation and would be known as the Vegetation and Environment Monitoring New Micro-Satellite (VENUS). VENUS would cover 50 representative sites in 12 spectral bands every other day, and its research was intended to contribute to the monitoring of water quality and the improvement of the representation of terrestrial surfaces in meteorology, climate and carbon models.

17. Two months earlier Israel had joined "Galileo", the European Global Navigation System. It had initiated a leading research project on dust storms designed to promote international monitoring of climate change and emerging natural disasters. It had officially signed cooperation agreements with sister agencies from the United States of America, France, Canada, Germany, the Russian Federation, India, Ukraine and the Netherlands, and looked forward to signing similar agreements in the near future with agencies from Chile, Brazil and the Republic of Korea.

18. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his country had devised a policy for incorporating space-related technology in development projects to resolve the problems it faced, particularly desertification and the scarcity of water in the region. The Libyan Remote-Sensing Centre, which had been set up in 1999 to follow up international developments in that field, was a member of numerous committees and associations, both national and international. It worked tirelessly in the field of space sciences and had recently organized the celebration of World Space Week.

19. Despite the progress that had been achieved, the world remained powerless in the face of environmental threats and challenges; successive disasters had confirmed the urgent need to promote international cooperation in the use of outer space for peaceful purposes in order to prevent them and mitigate their effects. In that connection, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had recently hosted the first international conference on the safety of the seas and oceans under the auspices of the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations. The agenda of the conference had included the establishment of a disaster early warning system. In that connection, his delegation supported the idea of setting up an international body to provide emergency disaster relief.

20. His delegation appreciated the role played by the developed countries and the progress that had been achieved, but he called on decision makers in those countries to assist the developing countries to acquire modern technology in accordance with the principle of "space for all". In that connection, an international system should be established to enable all States, irrespective of their scientific and social advancement, to make use of space technology and to participate in the sustainable development of the developing countries and in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

21. His delegation supported what had been said by earlier speakers on the progress that had been achieved in the codification of activities in outer space but pointed out that there remained many areas that needed to be regulated by law. He called on the international community to conclude agreements and promulgate international and national legislation to ensure the utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes. His delegation also called on all States to avoid any activity that might lead to the militarization of space, that would be detrimental to the environment of the planet and to the peace and security of its inhabitants.

22. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) stressed the importance of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, the benefits of which should be shared by all the peoples of the world. Recalling General Assembly resolution 59/116, he supported the call by the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for continued international cooperation in identifying new areas for the application of space science and technologies for sustainable development.

23. Continued progress in the application of space technology would contribute to economic, social and cultural development and promote the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It was essential, however, that developing countries should be active participants through the sharing of experiences and technologies, timely access to data and information at a reasonable cost, and capacity-building in the use of space technology.

24. His delegation had always attached great importance to space-based disaster management support, the importance of which had been underscored by the severe natural disasters that had occurred in the past 12 months and most recently by the earthquake that had struck south Asia, in particular his own country. An immediate satellite survey of the area of the earthquake might have provided a quicker assessment of the magnitude of the devastation. It was urgent therefore to ensure a more efficient use of space technology for the prediction, monitoring and mitigation of natural disasters. He supported the work of the ad hoc expert group on the possibility of creating an international entity to provide for coordination of space-based services for use in disaster management.

25. He expressed concern that increasing military activities in space were affecting international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and applications of outer space. The States with major space capabilities had a greater responsibility to contribute actively to the prevention of the militarization of outer space. A comprehensive convention would promote that objective. In the meantime, the existing agreements should be properly implemented. Given that the peaceful and military uses of outer space were inseparable, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Conference on Disarmament should coordinate their efforts and strengthen their working relationship. The Conference on Disarmament could benefit significantly from the expertise of COPUOS on issues relating to outer space and space technology. He therefore appealed to States which advocated a limited role for the Committee to cooperate with other delegations in order to bring about a solution acceptable to all concerned and he called on the scientific community to strengthen international cooperation to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes.

26. He welcomed the continued implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III and noted that his delegation had chaired the Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. At the regional level, his Government had organized a workshop on the monitoring and protection of the natural environment, jointly sponsored by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), the Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA) and the University of Stockholm.

27. At the national level, great progress had been made towards the application of space science and technology, including the use of satellite remote-sensing data to develop national land use maps to help to assess the national ecosystem with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of agriculture and forestry and minimizing land degradation. Other projects included the development of geographic information systems (GIS) to assist the state oil company in real-time monitoring of retail sales outlets and security alerts; a vehicle tracking system for crime prevention; and air quality assessment in major cities. As a result of the latter study, cleaner fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG) and cleaner technologies for industries were being promoted.

28. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria) welcomed the fact that the recent World Summit had recognized the important role that science and technology could play in promoting sustainable development. His delegation took note with satisfaction of the work of COPUOS during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, that had been the first time that the General Assembly itself had organized a plenary session on the role of space technology in human affairs. In furtherance of the UNISPACE III recommendations, his delegation was pleased that COPUOS would be working with the Commission on Sustainable Development by contributing to the thematic areas to be addressed by the Commission. As chair of Action Team 11 on the Application of the Results of Space Research in Sustainable Development, his delegation would continue its work on sustainable development within the Committee and also support the work of the other action teams.

29. As part of its contribution to sustainable development efforts globally, and particularly in Africa, Nigeria, in collaboration with South Africa and Algeria, was organizing the first African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for

Sustainable Development in Africa, which would serve as a forum to increase awareness in African countries of the need to develop interest in space science and technology and to participate in the work of COPUOS. It believed that the outcome of the conference would enhance the programmes of the science and technology priority areas of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

30. In the light of the pain and suffering experienced by all countries affected by disasters within the past 12 months, his delegation fully supported the proposed establishment of the Disaster Management International Space Coordinating Organization (DMISCO) to promote the application of space technology in disaster reduction and management on the global scale. Nigeria had contributed to the study on the feasibility of establishing DMISCO, and commended the ad hoc expert group for its work on it.

31. As a member of the Disaster Monitoring Constellation, his country had been providing effective services to users globally in the management of disasters, by means of its satellite NigeriaSat-1, and, through the Constellation, it had finalized its proposal to join the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters".

32. The issue of space and water was an important one that COPUOS should continue to address. As one of the primary beneficiaries of Lake Chad, the shrinking of which ranked as one of Africa's most severe water crises, Nigeria supported initiatives aimed at restoring water to the Lake.

33. His delegation noted with satisfaction the efforts of the Committee to develop a series of legal instruments for human exploration and the peaceful uses of outer space, and recognized the efforts of the Legal Subcommittee to review those instruments. It was therefore pleased that the Office for Outer Space Affairs, with the support of the Committee, had started, three years earlier, to provide opportunities for developing countries to build and enhance their knowledge of space law through space law workshops. Nigeria was pleased to be hosting one such workshop between 21 and 24 November 2005; it would provide an opportunity to introduce space law to legal practitioners from Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.

34. He welcomed the fact that, in consideration of its future role and activities, COPUOS had agreed that it was important to consider the evolution of space activities and how the Committee could develop a long-term plan to enhance international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. His delegation was pleased to note that the issue would be on the agenda of the Committee during its forty-ninth session, and it looked forward to making its own contributions to the attainment of that goal.

35. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) described some of the significant space-related activities that had taken place in his country in the past year. The Council for Science and Technology Policy of Japan, chaired by the Prime Minister, had adopted a report entitled "Basic Strategy of Japan for the Development and Use of Space", which provided a framework for Japan's space development programme for the coming decade. It placed the highest priority on ensuring technological reliability and on sustaining, developing and strengthening fundamental technologies. Furthermore, it listed three objectives: to ensure national security, to develop the economy and improve the quality of life of the country's citizens, and to increase scientific knowledge and promote sustainable development for humanity.

36. He was pleased to announce that the reliability of the H-IIA launch vehicle had been demonstrated by the successful launching in February 2005 of H-IIA Launch Vehicle No. 7, which had successfully placed the Multi-functional Transport Satellite-1 Replacement into orbit, where it would perform meteorological observations and air traffic control functions in the East Asia and Western Pacific regions.

37. As an active participant in the International Space Station programme, Japan welcomed the successful completion of the space shuttle mission (STS-114), which an astronaut from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency had joined as a mission specialist. It hoped that the results of that mission would contribute to the steady progress of the programme.

38. Noting that environmental degradation and large-scale disasters were among the most serious concerns of the international community, he said that Japan, which had been a co-chair of the ad hoc Group on Earth Observations, had actively contributed to the development of the 10-year implementation plan of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, which had been endorsed at the third Earth Observation Summit in Brussels in February 2005. Japan was currently participating in the Group as a member of the

Executive Committee and had offered to co-chair the Architecture and Data Committee, which discussed all architecture and data management aspects of the design, coordination and implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems. It was also promoting the development and operation of satellite data information systems that would facilitate the use of satellite data in such activities as Earth observations, disaster monitoring and resource management. Indeed, one of the further planned launches for H-IIA would serve to place the Advanced Land Observing Satellite into orbit. That satellite was expected to provide data for the creation of a hazard map and the prompt detection of disaster threats. Other projects in the field included the development of the Greenhouse Gas Observing Satellite and Global Precipitation Measurement/Dual-frequency Precipitation Radar.

39. In 1992, Japan had taken the initiative of establishing the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum, and had just hosted its twelfth session. The participants in that session had adopted recommendations relating to the strengthening of international cooperation towards the establishment of a disaster risk management system; further coordination among countries of the Asia-Pacific region to promote the utilization of the Japanese Experiment Module in the International Space Station; and the strengthening of the capability of the Asia-Pacific region to use and benefit from space science and technology and their applications.

40. Japan had also hosted the recent United Nations/International Astronautical Federation Workshop on Space Education and Capacity Building for Sustainable Development, the object of which was to review educational and capacity-building initiatives carried out by various entities and to seek ways to build synergies among them. Furthermore, Japan was currently hosting the Fifty-sixth International Astronautical Congress, during which the space agencies of Japan, Canada, Europe and the United States had agreed to establish the International Space Education Board.

41. Space was a common frontier for all mankind, offering infinite possibilities. It was important to look beyond national borders to help to bring the benefits derived from space activities not only to the citizens of the countries engaged in space activities but to people all over the world. Japan was committed to working towards prosperity for humanity by engaging in international space activities, in the hope that such cooperative efforts would result in benefits for all.

42. **Mr. Jean** (Burkina Faso) recalled that several speakers in the general debate in the General Assembly in September 2005 had called for the non-militarization of outer space. That same call had recently been reiterated in the First Committee in relation to disarmament and international security issues. In particular, the statements made by the representatives of China and the Russian Federation were to be welcomed.

43. Military objectives benefited only a small number of States, but the use of outer space for peaceful purposes was critical to development. Indeed, many reports of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, notably the most recent report (A/60/20), confirmed the degree to which space science and technology contributed to sustainable development.

44. Satellites capable of collecting and distributing data on the state of the atmosphere, oceans, soils, climate, Earth and the space environment provided long-term and high-quality ecological measurements for monitoring natural disasters, including floods, typhoons and droughts, as well as for meteorological forecasting. In addition, remote-sensing techniques had contributed extensively to the improvement of methods of forecasting and the collection of data, both in the environmental sphere and in the identification of indicators for water management. In health and education, telemedicine and tele-education considerably facilitated access to the latest information and programmes. Furthermore, geostationary satellites had brought about a genuine revolution in telecommunications, navigation and air transportation.

45. Burkina Faso had been a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space since 1980 and was currently serving as Second Vice-Chairman/Rapporteur. Like most developing countries, it derived considerable advantages, via international cooperation, from the positive spin-offs of space technology. For example, under the TIGER initiative, Canada was financing a project for assessing the water resources of river basins, based on Earth observation data. Another project initiated by the West Africa Regional Office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature focused on the improvement of water resource management in the Volta basin. In the health sector, France was implementing a project for

epidemiological surveillance of infectious diseases; components of that project included the installation of a monitoring facility in the area where meningitis was prevalent, and a pilot project to establish an inventory of surface water in the basin of the Nakambé river, using remote-sensing techniques. Those projects demonstrated that the application of space technologies for peaceful purposes did not benefit only the developed countries.

46. Enhanced international cooperation at all levels would no doubt make it possible for other States to take advantage of space technologies. The existence of the International Space Station, or of the Global Navigation Satellite System demonstrated clearly that space technology responded to the concerns of all States.

47. His delegation commended the Committee for the efforts it was making under the auspices of the United Nations to establish regional training centres in space sciences and engineering in India, Morocco, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico. The transfer of technology and knowledge offered the best guarantee of cooperation on an international scale.

48. Given the multiple challenges facing all of humanity, it was essential to adopt an international legal instrument on the peaceful uses of outer space. A much higher level of attention needed to be devoted to environmental issues. The occurrence of multiple natural disasters, notably the tsunami in Indonesia and hurricane Katrina in Florida, as well as the recent earthquake in Pakistan, had demonstrated cruelly to the world that no country was safe from disaster.

49. The establishment of an international system of disaster prevention and management, as recommended by the Committee at its forty-eighth session, held in Vienna in June 2005, was a matter of urgency. Such a system would no doubt make it possible not only to deal more effectively with disasters that were an obstacle to development, but also to save thousands of human lives.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.